

THE TOP 25 CIGARS OF 2017

cigar aficionado

THE GOOD LIFE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

www.cigaraficionado.com



OTTER



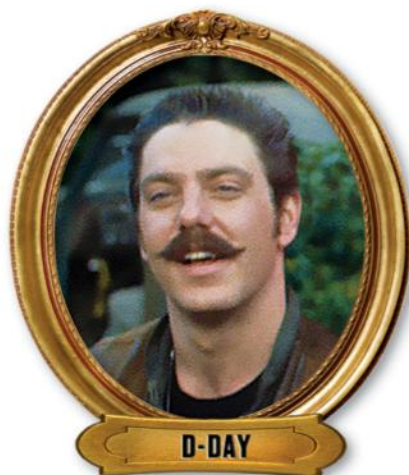
BLUTO



BOON

ANIMAL HOUSE

AMERICA'S EPIC COMEDY CELEBRATES 40 YEARS



D-DAY



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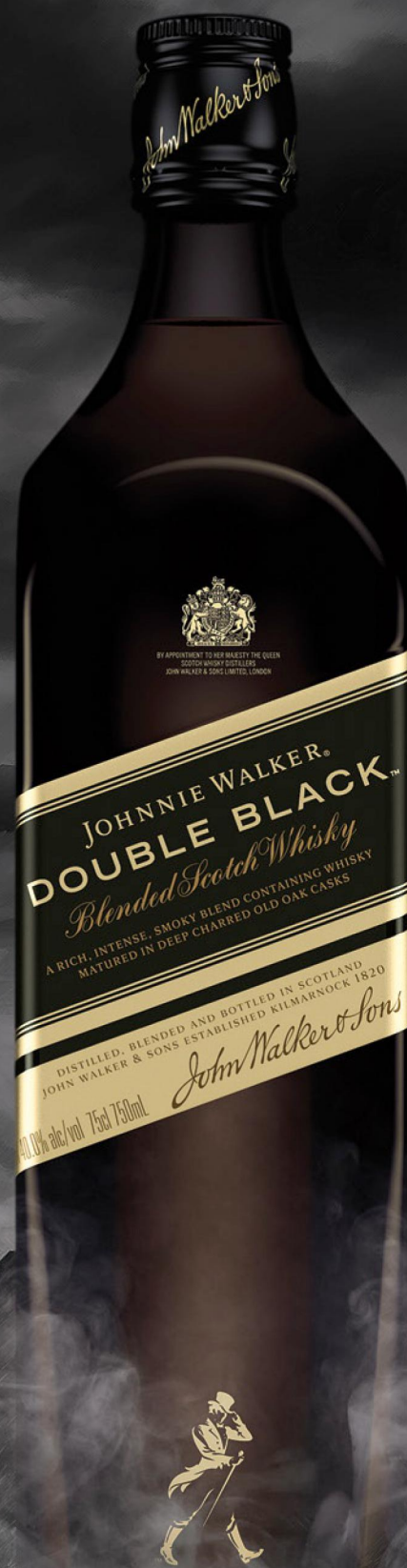
HOOVER

**THE KING OF PUTTERS
LUXURY SAFARIS
104 CIGARS RATED**



John Walker & Sons

THE INTENSE BLEND



PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY.

JOHNNIE WALKER DOUBLE BLACK Blended Scotch Whisky. 40% Alc/Vol. ©2018 Imported by Diageo, Norwalk, CT.

THE INTENSITY OF ISLAY

Crafted with a higher proportion of Islay malts and matured in deep-charred oak casks, Johnnie Walker™ Double Black™ is Johnnie Walker™ Black Label™ with extra layers of smokiness.



JOHNNIE WALKER.
KEEP WALKING.

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Johnnie Walker & Sons

THE INTENSE B

“AN INTENSE AND RICH PREMIUM BLEND WITH A SMOULDERING SPICINESS AND POWERFUL PEAT SMOKE FINISH. BOLD FLAVOR AND CLASSIC CHARACTER – THIS IS JOHNNIE WALKER BLACK LABEL REINTERPRETED WITH A NEW LEVEL OF INTENSITY”

Sim Beveridge

JOHNNIE WALKER MASTER BLENDER

The very creation of Johnnie Walker Double Black is proof that the pioneering spirit of our founder, John Walker, is still very much alive. Our blenders are always stepping boldly into the unknown, pushing boundaries and seeking new expressions while protecting the traditions passed down across generations. And at this very moment they have over 150 different live experiments underway.

When they sought to craft Johnnie Walker Double Black, they wanted to heighten the smoky flavors of the world's most popular 12 year old blend – Johnnie Walker Black Label. It was with great care that they selected mature, naturally smoky whiskies including Caol Ila® Single Malt from the misty isle of Islay, blending their flavors in deep-charred oak casks.

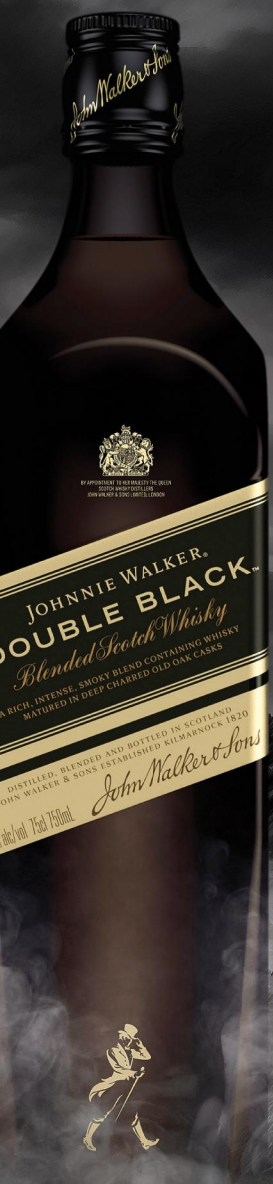
Johnnie Walker Double Black proves you don't stay ahead by standing still. This exciting blend is full-bodied and complex yet supremely smooth, with peat smoke swirling through hints of rich raisins, apples, pears, vanilla and oranges. With a warming and powerful spicy oak finish it is true testimony to the skill of our blenders who have invented a critically-acclaimed blend to take the flavors of Johnnie Walker into the 21st century.



PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY.

JOHNNIE WALKER DOUBLE BLACK Blended Scotch Whisky. 40% Alc/Vol. ©2018 Imported by Diageo, Norwalk, CT.

LEND



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cigar
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2 CIGAR
of 2016

RATED
95



Rocky  Patel

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SURGEON GENERAL WARNING: Tobacco Smoke Increases The Risk Of Lung Cancer And Heart Disease, Even In Nonsmokers.



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january/february 2018

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27



52



78

ON THE COVER
Animal House: the unlikely story of a legendary comedy.



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golf **96** **PUTTER UP**
 Scotty Cameron puts his legendary
 putters in the hands of touring
 professionals and duffers alike.

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 With luxury amenities and a widening
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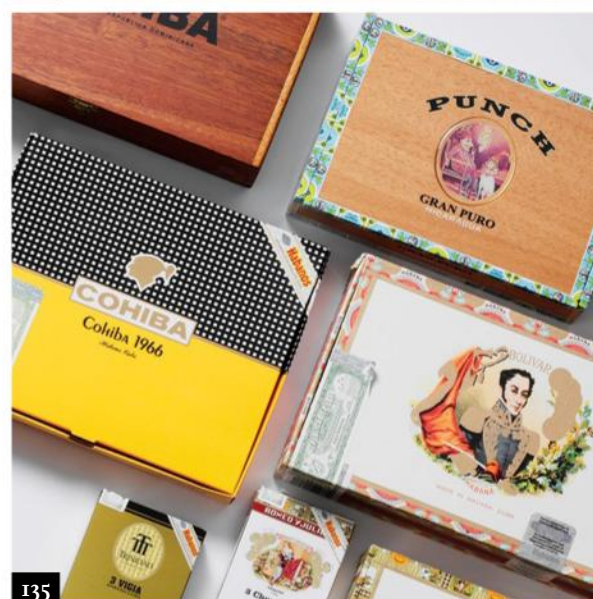
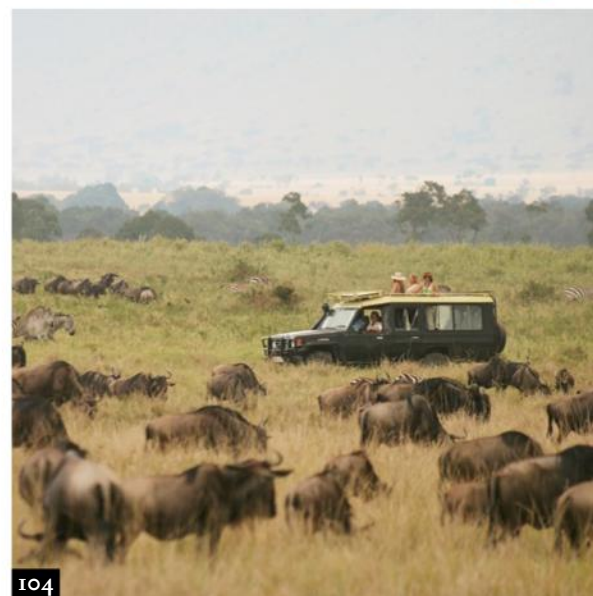
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highlights

It's been said quite often that "there is no better time than now to be a cigar lover," to the point where it sounds like a marketing cliché. In our newest tasting, 33 of the 79 cigars reviewed scored 90 points or higher. Perhaps the higher scores are an indication that the trite expression has transcended into the realm of fact.



TOP PANETELA 7-20-4 LANCERO

Once a clear Havana produced in New Hampshire in the 19th century, this resurrected brand is now rolled in Honduras with a dark, Brazilian Mata Fina wrapper.

HONDURAS

93



TOP CHURCHILL OLIVA SERIE O CHURCHILL

This Nicaraguan puro sports Habano-seed leaves from the country's three major growing regions: Jalapa, Condega and Estelí, where the cigars are rolled.

NICARAGUA

92



TOP CORONA GORDA MONTECRISTO DOUBLE EDMUNDO

This longer version of Cuba's popular Montecristo Edmundo tied with another Cuban for top corona gorda, the Hoyo de Monterrey Le Hoyo de San Juan (Tubo).

CUBA

92



TOP FIGURADO UNDERCROWN SUN GROWN FLYING PIG

Enrobed in an Ecuadorian Sumatra wrapper, the Undercrown Sun Grown Flying Pig tied with Cuba's Rafael Gonzalez 88 Exclusivo Asia Pacífico and the Dominican Villiger La Flor de Ynclan Torpedo for top figurado.

NICARAGUA

92



TOP ROBUSTO EL REY DEL MUNDO CHOIX SUPREME

At 48 ring gauge, the Choix Supreme skews thin for a robusto, but is packed with tasty tobacco from Cuba's famed Pinar del Río region.

CUBA

92



TOP LONSDALE NORTEÑO LONSDALE

Spanish for "northerner," the Norteño from Drew Estate wraps oily, Mexican San Andrés leaf around a Honduran binder and aged Nicaraguan filler.

NICARAGUA

91



BEST BUY ARTURO FUENTE SPANISH LONSDALE

Covered in a toothy Cameroon wrapper, the binder and filler tobaccos from this affordable Fuente (it's a mere \$5.20) were grown in the Dominican Republic.

DOM. REP.

88

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editors' note

Shame on Apple

Cigar smokers' First Amendment rights denied

Right now around 700 million people around the world are using an iPhone. Both of us have iPhones of our own. But lately, looking at our screens makes us sad. That's because Apple doesn't believe in the First Amendment, doesn't believe in free speech. The company, one of the largest on the planet, has declared war on cigar smokers. It banned CIGAR AFICIONADO's Where to Smoke app from its store on October 30.

Where to Smoke, which we created in 2015, is a free, informational app, which points our readers to more than 2,600 cigar shops, cigar bars and other cigar-friendly venues. In a world where fewer and fewer places allow you to enjoy a fine cigar, it's a valuable resource.

Our editorial staff dedicated an enormous amount of work to vetting all of the locations that exist in the database, and our developers worked for months to turn all that information into a beautiful app that guides cigar smokers to their destinations. The places we highlight are for adults only, and the app doesn't sell cigars.

Apple claimed Where To Smoke was in violation of its policy regarding apps that promote tobacco products. We fought the ban, but our complaints fell on deaf ears. Apple sent us this final e-mail when it pulled the plug:

"We continue to find that your app promotes the use of tobacco...which is not permitted on the App Store."

Soon after, Apple banned the Cigar Rights of America app. We're sure more cigar apps will be banned in the near future.

These moves are outrageous, and what makes them even more despicable is the fact Apple has no issue with apps that assist people in buying marijuana. Do a search yourself, and you'll find Weedmaps, "the largest and most comprehensive marijuana directory and discovery resource on the planet," or Leafly, "the

world's cannabis information resource." When we asked Apple about the contradiction, we were told that apps about marijuana do not violate its policy.

That's not all you'll find in the App Store. There are programs which simulate gambling, ones on which you can become a sniper (Sniper 3D: Shoot To Kill) and there's even one called Sexy Booth, which allows you to point your camera at someone, take their photo, and "see through clothes like an airport body scanner." Somehow this is OK, but Where to Smoke is not.

It bears repeating that cigars are a legal product, able to be bought by adults in all 50 U.S. states and all around the world. Marijuana remains a banned substance in half of the United States, and most of the rest of the world.

Apple Inc. is big—*Fortune* ranks it as the third-largest company in the United States, and it posted \$229 billion in revenues in fiscal 2017. But banning our app from its store doesn't take it away from you. If you already have Where to Smoke on your iPhone, you can continue to use it. You will still receive new locations as we update the app, but you won't be privy to any new designs or bug fixes. Those of you who don't have an iPhone can still download Where to Smoke for an Android in Google Play. It's free. And you can always use it on our mobile-friendly website. Just go to wts.cigaraficionado.com.

This is David against Goliath, and there's no happy ending for the little guy this time. Apple is no friend to cigar smokers.

MARVIN R. SHANKEN
EDITOR & PUBLISHER

DAVID SAVONA
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



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- Jonathan Drew



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out of the humidor

Dear Marvin,

My compliments on a terrific and refreshing interview with Michael Jordan [December 2017]. Now I understand more fully why he ranked as the most popular athlete in history in The Harris Poll. Your frank discussion with Mr. Jordan reinforced why we love heroes—because we remember them at their strongest. Michael never disappointed. When the stage was the biggest he seemed to always rise to the occasion. The funny thing about heroes though—they're regular people. For everything he has accomplished, Michael appeared calm but remarkably humble during your interview.

We will all remember Michael Jordan for being the greatest winner of our lifetime because that's what he is. No one else could be like Mike.

Tim Groza

Greensboro, Georgia

Dear Marvin,

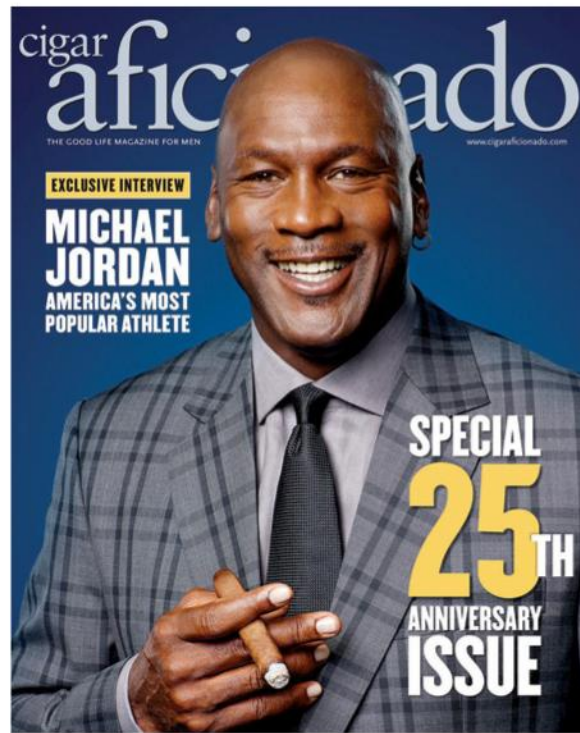
Congratulations on your 25-year anniversary. It took guts to do what you did and launch a magazine in 1992. But, besides congratulations, I also want to say thank you.

I remember 1992 well. My father had just passed away from a terrible and drawn-out ordeal with colon cancer, when only days later my first child was born: a son, named Jack. I had just been named a vice president and corporate officer of a *Fortune* 50 company, the youngest in the firm. At the age of 32, the combination of grief, anxiety and elation was a lot to handle.

Upon hearing the news of my Dad's passing, my son's birth and my grand promotion, a gracious colleague hustled me down to a local tobacconist and bought me and himself the best cigars in the place. I don't remember the brand, but I do remember that we lit them up on the spot and enjoyed a tremendous moment of life. One I have never forgotten.

In the corner of the store I spied the inaugural edition of CIGAR AFICIONADO. I will never forget thinking that I had stumbled onto a lifestyle that would provide me with unforgettable and authentic enjoyment. Since then, your magazine has provided a guide map.

I never got to smoke a cigar with my Dad: a regret. But I am comforted knowing that my son and I frequently sit—him with a Montecristo White and me with my La



“Upon hearing the news of my Dad’s passing, my son’s birth and my promotion, a gracious colleague hustled me down to a local tobacconist.”

—John Baker, Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Gloria Cubana—to talk about the issues of the day, laugh at the absurdities, and love the time we share with one another. What a great ride it has been. I’m glad we were all in it together.

John Baker

Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Dear Marvin,

Congratulations on your 25th anniversary. Your success is a classic example of discovering an underserved market and providing the right product to appeal to its needs. CIGAR AFICIONADO could be a real-life case study in business schools. To achieve so much after starting in an uncertain economy is a great credit to you and your team.

Rich Foley

Fayette, Ohio

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E-MAIL letters@cigaraficionado.com • **LETTERS** 825 8th Ave., 33rd floor, New York, NY 10019 • **EDITORS' BLOGS** Find out what the editors of CIGAR AFICIONADO are thinking—and smoking—in our editors' blogs. David Savona, Gordon Mott, Jack Bettridge, Gregory Mottola and Andrew Nagy want to hear from you. The conversation is taking place on cigaraficionado.com.

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Dear Marvin,

Congratulations on 25 years of publication. Your 25th-anniversary issue, for me, is your best work yet and truly captures all the greatness and class of CIGAR AFICIONADO. I read it cover to cover and I especially enjoyed reading the editors' first experiences with cigars in Great Smokes as it made me pause to reflect on my own first experience.

Right, wrong or indifferent, when I was a boy, film and television revealed a pattern that resonated with me during an impressionable age; that successful, professional men enjoyed Scotch and cigars. The brand of whisky was irrelevant. It was the decadent crystal decanter the whisky was in that expressed its significance. The pairing of a great cigar only further demonstrated to me the achievement those men of influence had earned. I now know the pleasure of whisky and cigars is not limited, nor should it ever be, to a select group.

After finishing college, I was a young adult forging my own path as a professional. Over a span of several years, I managed to climb into a stratosphere that I believed flirted with that crystal decanter. It was on a business trip when, cautionary spending eschewed, I appreciated a glass of Johnny Walker Blue. I promised myself at that moment, when I earned six figures, I would buy myself a bottle and celebrate with a cigar.

Purchasing the bottle of Scotch was a breeze; walk in, point at the bottle and buy. Finding the right cigar, however, was not. The mixed aromas of spice and nougat sweetness of the walk-in humidor instantly entranced me, but its floor-to-ceiling walls of unending choices overwhelmed me. I was now a man overboard in uncharted, choppy seas with no life vest. The shop tobacconist asked me what I was in the mood for but I had no idea. In the end, I took a stab on a cigar that battled against the minerals and peat of the whisky; disappointment created simply from the lack of knowledge of cigars.

Knowing there must be a more sensible process, I picked up my first CIGAR AFICIONADO at a local wine store to see if the key to unlock the cigar mystery was within its pages. When I found the blind tasting results, providing flavor profiles and ratings, it was Xanadu. I scoured each page and meticulously notated every cigar I wanted to try. Over a short period, I moved from cigar con to connoisseur. Because of the brilliant idea to include this section in your magazine, I was afforded the privilege to enjoy so many wonderful flavors and pairings and continue to do so. I want to thank you for aiding the expansion of my knowledge and love for cigars. I am not convinced that would have happened without the help of your publication.

Ryan Oliphant

Phoenix, Arizona ♦

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Cottage Fire Pit



Palmer Cottage Bedroom



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HISTORY IN THE MAKING

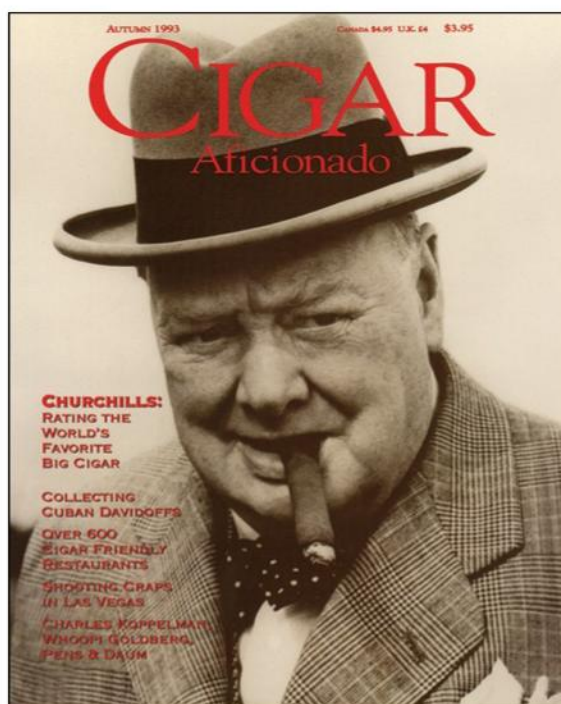
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The Readers' Choice

THE GREAT Sir Winston Churchill once said “Victory will never be found in taking the line of least resistance.” The legendary statesman (and unapologetic cigar smoker) lived up to that quote by navigating a tough draw to win CIGAR AFICIONADO’s Readers’ Choice Cover Challenge—he’s our most popular cover ever.

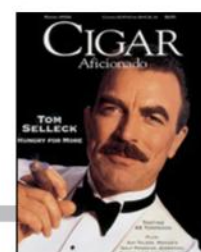
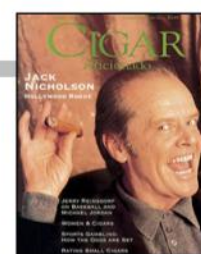
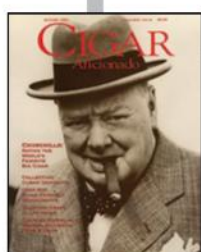
He faced Michael Strahan and Matthew McConaughey in the first two rounds, then George Burns, another cigar-puffing legend. He then beat The Sopranos before taking on



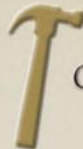
the Fuente family in our Final Four, and then squared off against John F. Kennedy in the final round.

Kennedy’s road to the finals had him up against Tom Selleck, then Jack Nicholson before the final showdown with Churchill.

The outcome was decided by more than 38,000 votes by our readers. One lucky reader will win a box of superb and well-aged vintage cigars from the personal humidor of Marvin R. Shanken, editor and publisher of CIGAR AFICIONADO. The winner will be announced at cigaraficionado.com.





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José O. Padrón
1964

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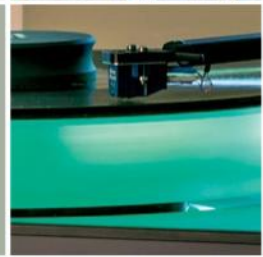
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good life guide

Living well demands that we indulge in things that are of superior quality and excellent origin. This guide aspires to find and recommend the best of everything to aficionados of the good life.

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Heinrich Villiger

-Heinrich Villiger



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Laucala Island, Fiji

Touching down in a private plane on Laucala Island in Fiji, you may be reminded of the opening credits of the old TV show “Fantasy Island.” The requisite lush hillsides and crystalline azure tides paint a picture of pristine paradise, plus a staff of more than 400 is dedicated to making your vacation dreams come true.

The picturesque old coconut plantation was once Malcolm Forbes’s personal hideaway. Billionaire Dietrich Mateschitz, the Austrian cofounder of Red Bull, purchased the 3,500-acre island from the Forbes estate in 2003 and transformed it into one of the world’s most lavish and exclusive resorts, with only 25 villas.

Depending on your fantasy you can simply lounge by a pool or on a private beach or pack your schedule with activities—which, like your meals and drinks, are included. Rates start at \$4,800 a night. A fleet of boats is ready for diving, deep-sea fishing, snorkeling or sunset cruising. A submersible craft and jet skis provide joy rides beneath and above the waves. Other options include tennis, horseback riding and hiking.

The island’s 18-hole golf course is designed in harmony with the natural environment—on the signature 12th hole, a beach doubles as a bunker. You’ll likely have the course to yourself, so

there’s no stressing about tee times, and no need to lug your gear either as Laucala has the latest premium equipment, plus an on-call pro who can offer a lesson or simply join you for a round.

Guests typically meet with the concierge upon arrival to chart out their wish lists and make a loose schedule. You can book treatments in the cliff-top spa and meals at five different dining venues ranging from fine dining at the Plantation House to Asian specialties at the Seagrass Lounge and Restaurant, featuring an authentic Japanese tepanyaki table built on the side of a cliff overlooking the sea.

When executive chef Jean Luc Amann arrived in 2016, he discovered a culinary Eden. He cultivates his own ingredients from acres of gardens, a hydroponic center, and a working farm stocked with chickens, pigs and Wagyu cows who munch special grass. Menus capitalize on whatever ingredients are at peak quality, and naturally, there’s abundant seafood from local waters.

After dinner, enjoy a cigar on the porch of the Plantation House, sipping the local rum while overlooking the captivating coconut grove of slender palms swaying with the trade winds.

Visit Laucala.com

—Laurie Kahle



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High-End Turntables

Forget, for a moment, the palpable satisfaction of holding a physical record in your hand. And never mind the nostalgia that comes with the warm crackle and hiss of a needle settling into a groove. Concentrate instead on the main reason why you need to switch to vinyl and upgrade to a quality turntable: high fidelity.

Sound, after all, is analog by definition, and something is always lost in the digital conversion process. If the music files you've downloaded to your computer sound flat, or lack sonic detail and richness, consider a return to pure analog. But don't cheap out and expect the precise fidelity that vinyl promises.

New to high-end audio? Shinola, the Detroit watch company, offers a basic introduction with the simple design esthetic of its Runwell Turntable (\$2,500). While Shinola doesn't manufacture turntables, the company collaborated with VPI Industries (royalty in the audio realm) for a beautifully minimalist, belt-driven record player featuring a built-in phono preamp, a variety of stylish finishes and a lifetime guarantee. Setup is practically plug-and-play, so you don't have to obsess over cartridges and preamps.

One well-established darling of the turntable world is the McIntosh MT5 (\$6,500). It's similar to its predecessor the MT10 (only less expensive and far easier to set up), and is lauded for its ability to precisely translate studio recordings to your living room

without coloration to the sound. The glowing, silicone-acrylic platter (pictured) helps to dampen vibrations while its belt-drive motor is not only stable, but quiet. A recent demo of Dave Brubeck's album *Time Further Out* rendered Paul Desmond's saxophone so convincingly, it seemed he was playing in the room.

Looking to take it to an even higher level? Mark Levinson certainly was. Although highly respected in the esoteric world of audiophilia, until recently Mark Levinson lacked a turntable in its portfolio. The omission was filled when it teamed up with VPI (who else?) and produced the somewhat intimidating Mark Levinson No. 515 (\$10,000). Its chassis is fabricated of aluminum and composite material for exceptional dampening properties; the 20-lb aluminum platter rotates on an inverted bearing for rotational accuracy; and the triple-belt drive system provides smooth, quiet operation. Keep in mind, this unit is built like a tank, so its industrial appearance will dominate almost any decor.

Of course, a good turntable needs equally good speakers and components. You could mix and match brands or keep your system uniform, depending on the type of output you're looking for. In the end, it's only your ears that matter.

Visit shinola.com, mcintoshlabs.com, marklevinson.com

—Gregory Mottola

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Sous Vide Cooking

It was December of 2008 and renowned chef Thomas Keller was on the “CBS Morning Show” demonstrating a seemingly arcane cooking method he used at his restaurants called sous vide (pronounced *soo veed*). Slicing a piece of beef cooked under vacuum at low temperature revealed meat that was medium-rare from edge to edge as opposed to the well-done-on-the-outside result you would expect from grilling. Harry Smith, then the show’s anchor, ventured that “sous vide may be too complex for the home chef, but it’s hard to argue with the results.”

Fast forward a decade of technological advances, and sous vide is most definitely something you can do at home. You want to cook a perfect steak? Give it a bath. Actually, a hot bath. Sous vide, mistakenly likened to the old “boil in a bag” way to cook frozen vegetables, is actually steeping with precision. The “bathtub” can be a stockpot or a beer cooler or something in between. The bath water is heated by a now less-clunky immersion circulator to a precise temperature. (Clip it on and plug it in.) The science is that the temperature of the water never rises above (for the purposes of this recipe) 129° F, and neither does that rib eye you want medium-rare.

We tested two of the leading, compact and reasonably priced immersion circulators, Joule and Anova (about \$200 each). Both have smartphone apps and online support with recipes, but the Anova also sports controls on the 2.2-lb. unit and seems more suitable for the home cook. The Joule works only from the app, weighs about half as much and is more powerful, heating up the water about 10 minutes faster than the Anova. Both accomplish the same goal: a steak that is evenly cooked from “edge to edge.”

Start with a high-quality steak. Chill it to below 41°F (the safe zone). Vacuum seal it with seasonings in food-safe plastic. Place your steak in the sous vide bath at the desired temperature you’d like the finished steak. Cook time depends mainly on the thickness of the steak, but two hours for up to a two-inch-thick cut worked well in our tests. Don’t worry if you go a little or a lot over, the temperature of the steak will never rise above what you originally set, but it will get more tender.

When you take the steak out of the plastic, sear the outside in a super-hot cast iron skillet. Sear each side, flipping after 30 seconds (twice on each side in our tests), until you get the char you want. Searing this way will preserve the precise edge-to-edge doneness. A perfect steak.

Visit anovaculinary.com and chefsteps.com/joule

—Alejandro Benes



TOP: JOHN BEDELL; BOTTOM: ARAN COYOAGA

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London Shirt Making Comes to You

The pinnacle of style is often equated with London bespoke clothing: garments cut and made specifically for the wearer. But there are downsides. In a suit, that kind of service can easily run past \$5,000. And that's without travel to England. The good news is that many London tailors periodically visit major U.S. cities to tender their services in what are called trunk shows. Even better, you can get a taste of that custom tradition for a fraction of the price with bespoke shirts.

Recently, James MacAuslan, bespoke cutter from Budd Shirts, located just off Jermyn Street, London's renowned shirt mecca, visited Los Angeles as part of a swing through the States. With him came a century of shirt-making tradition, as well as 6,000 fabric choices (including the iconic Budd stripes) and dozens of options in shape and form.

Budd has a particular house style that includes a full chest and the Budd collar, designed to sit up nicely even without buttoning, and if you were to buy ready-to-wear from the shop, that's what you would likely get. But MacAuslan is delighted to take your dictations on form and fit, making the shirt as loose or tight as you like (based on 20 to 30 measurements). You then choose from eight collar styles as diverse as the Penny Round (a sort of F. Scott Fitzgerald look) and the Washington (closer to a *GoodFellas* style). You also have six cuff options and a host of details like pockets and monograms. This sort of treatment starts at \$340 and varies according to fabric price.

A thriftier option is made-to-measure (commencing at around \$260), which includes fabric, collar and cuff options on a standard pattern. It is not as exacting, however. "It's the nature of bespoke that every element can be adjusted up to an eighth of an inch," says MacAuslan. "We get a lot of dandies—especially here [in Los Angeles]. That's why they're going bespoke, and we can certainly entertain that for them."

Naturally, other Jermyn Street shirt makers, such as Harvie & Hudson and Hilditch & Key will make the trip stateside for your



convenience. London's Turnbull & Asser and Thomas Pink maintain a retail presence in America. Which is not to say you can't be patriotic. Some fine American custom shirt makers include Mel Gambert, Sartoria Ambrosiana and Hamilton.

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—Jack Bettridge

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Range Rover Velar

Traveling in northern climes the weather changes quickly, so there's something for everyone as we charge up the serpentine roadway linking Norway's foreboding Kongen, Bispen and Trollstige, or King, Bishop and Queen mountains. The sun shines, rain pelts down like needles, and a double rainbow arcs over the valley below. And plenty of snow skirts the side of the roadway as we race by in our new, 2018 Range Rover Velar.

The newest entrant among the fast-growing Land Rover family, Velar slots neatly into the brand's upper tier, between the compact Range Rover Evoque and the Range Rover Sport. If your idea of a Rover is a sturdy box on wheels you'd be half-right. The entire Land Rover family still puts function first, as we discovered during a couple of days of rock-crawling and fjord crossings. But in recent years Land Rover has proven that form and function can go hand in hand.

Cats-eye headlamps frame the bold grille of one of the hand-somest SUVs on the road. Its modified fastback silhouette is topped by a steeply raked roofline. An abundance of glass includes a panoramic top through which to watch the world roll by. Inside, it may not be quite as plush as the flagship Range Rover (and yep, we know the names get confusing). But Velar's cabin is the most modern among the members of this British SUV family, with plenty of high-line features, including heated and cooled leather seats and one of the best infotainment systems on the road. It also features a terrain response system that, with a touch of a button,

sets up a dozen vehicle functions to best handle whatever challenge you're about to face, from deep mud and ruts to seemingly impassable boulders.

Velar is no "soft roader." Equipped with a flexible all-wheel-drive system and a height-adjustable suspension, it's as capable as nearly any model in the Land Rover family. We prove that point by climbing almost straight up a rubble-strewn hillside. After a brief lunch break and a spectacular view of some fjords, we head back down the same way, this time splashing through a swollen creek before finally merging back onto what passes here for a roadway. And that's when we come to realize that the Velar neatly delivers the best of all worlds. It's as nimble as a mountain goat off-road, yet it offers the sort of comfort and handling you'd expect of a luxury sedan on paved roads.

It's also as quick as most comparably sized and priced "three-box" models, its 380-horsepower supercharged V-6 launching the Velar from 0 to 60 in a mere 5.3 seconds. For those who want to conserve a bit more fuel, Range Rover also offers a 180-hp diesel and a 247-hp, gas-powered inline-four.

Spend a little time behind the wheel of the Range Rover Velar and you'll quickly discover why the collective Land Rover family has become one of the auto industry's fastest-growing brands. Pricing for the 2018 Velar starts at \$50,895.

Visit landrover.com

—Paul A. Eisenstein



Bronze Watches

Since the turn of this century, high-performance, cutting-edge materials—from various kinds of carbon to high-tech ceramic to transparent sapphire crystal—have been the news in watchmaking. Now bronze—an ancient alloy of copper and tin that has more than four centuries of history in the industry—is making its own vintage-inspired design statement. Durable, anticorrosive and developing a protective patina with age, the metal has a long heritage in the bygone eras of mariners and pioneering aviators.

Eterna ventured into the material for the first time with the KonTiki Bronze Manufacture Limited Edition (\$2,950) that pays tribute to the 70th anniversary of Thor Heyerdahl's storied raft expedition from South America to Polynesia, which was equipped with Eterna timepieces. Limited to 300 pieces and water-resistant to 200 meters, the watch stays true to KonTiki codes with luminous, triangular hour markers set on a black granite-patterned dial for legibility. The unidirectional rotating bezel features a no-decompression-limits scale that indicates how long a diver can spend at a particular depth before needing to decompress.

Looking to the skies, Zenith introduced a new bronze version of its vintage-spirited Pilot Extra Special Chronograph (\$7,100). The collection recalls the high-precision cockpit instruments and tool watches developed by the brand during the pioneering days of flight. The brawny 45-mm watch exudes rugged retro character in bronze with an oversize ratcheted crown, sandblasted black

dial with large luminous Arabic numerals, and khaki green oily nubuck leather strap. At its heart is the El Primero Calibre 4069 high-frequency column-wheel chronograph movement that can track elapsing times to a tenth of a second.

Montblanc also referenced the aviation history of Minerva, a historic chronograph specialist that the brand's parent company Richemont acquired in 2006 in a bid to endow the watch newcomer, best known for pens, with some watchmaking cred. The Montblanc 1858 Chronograph Tachymeter Limited Edition Bronze (\$27,500) takes its esthetic cues from a 1930s-era Minerva pilot's watch. Details such as a railroad minute track, cathedral-style hands and Arabic numerals (treated with beige SuperLuminova for a luminous update), and an onion crown are faithful to the original, and Montblanc tags it with a 1930s-era version of its logo in keeping with the period mood. The beautifully finished mono-pusher Montblanc Manufacture caliber MB M16.29 is also modeled on the original Minerva pocket watch caliber.

The beauty of a bronze case is that as the metal oxidizes it darkens with a distinctive patina of brown, green and black shades that make it unique. And each manufacturer has fitted them with titanium or stainless-steel case backs to ensure that your wrist doesn't acquire a green patina of its own.

Visit eterna.com, zenith-watches.com, montblanc.com

—Laurie Kahle

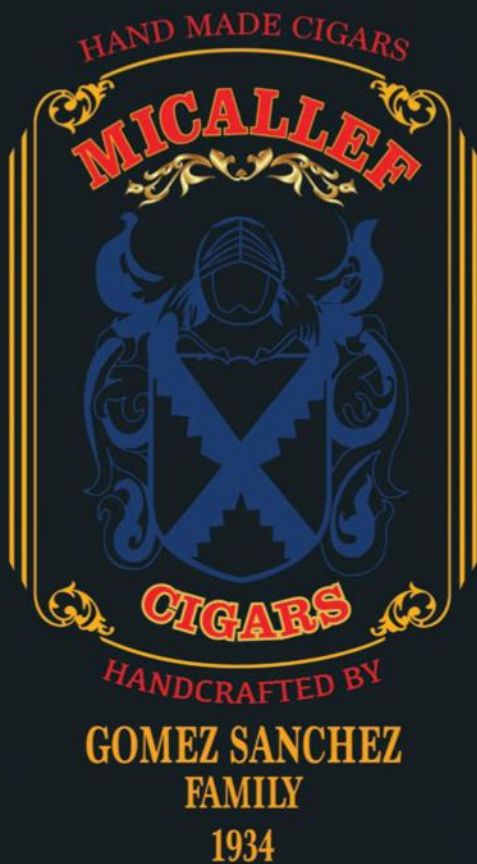


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Scotch Cocktails

Renowned as the first whisky of the world, Scotch gets its fair share of praise, but what it doesn't get is used in a lot of cocktails. Purists think it's too precious to dilute. Others find it too curmudgeonly in a mixing situation compared with outgoing Bourbon and gin. But an elite coterie of concoctions prove that Scotch—once coaxed—can be a cocktail's friend for life.

You'll recognize the **Rob Roy** as the Scots' take on the Yankee Manhattan, only made with Scotch whisky in place of rye or Bourbon. Sure it's a knockoff, but one that is distinctive enough to deserve its own name. The Rob Roy offers at least as many variations as there are single-malt and blended Scotches to be tried. Adjust the vermouth ratio to reflect the relative proof and body of the whisky, adding more aperitif with bolder expressions and backing off on the lighter ones. With precious drams you also may want to spare the vermouth. Start by stirring it in with an eyedropper and testing it until you have it just right.

ROB ROY

2½ oz. Scotch whisky

¾ oz. sweet vermouth

1 dash Peychaud's bitters

Shake or stir with ice and strain into a cocktail glass. Garnish with a lemon twist or maraschino cherry.

Anyone who thinks Scotch can't play well with strangers should try the **Blood & Sand**, one of the seemingly strangest cocktails around. Almost nine decades ago The Savoy Cocktail Book introduced this menagerie of a drink. With whisky, orange juice, cherry liqueur and vermouth, it sounds like kid's stuff—a Zombie. But it works to perfection. The Scotch brings character and class to a mixture that would otherwise be simply cloying. The other ingredients give youthful brightness to the whisky.

BLOOD & SAND

¼ part Scotch whisky

¼ part blood orange juice

¼ part cherry liqueur

¼ part sweet vermouth

Shake over ice and strain into a cocktail glass. No garnish.

The '60s brought us the Rat Pack craze for The Rusty Nail (Scotch mixed with the Scotch liqueur Drambuie), but it wasn't until the turn of this century that we got a Caledonian cocktail that was another real game changer. The **Penicillin** introduces Scotch to ginger, lemon and honey and includes two different whiskies in



one glass. The first is a blended Scotch, and the finish is a floater of peaty whisky to put smoke on the nose without overwhelming the palate. This affirms the concept that special care should be taken in choosing Scotch types and regions for use in cocktails. Despite its name and perceived palliative effects, it shouldn't be mistaken for your doctor's prescription of the same name.

PENICILLIN

2 oz. blended Scotch whisky

¾ oz. fresh lemon juice

¾ oz. honey syrup

¼ oz. smoky Islay single-malt Scotch whisky

2-3 quarter-size slices fresh ginger

candied ginger

Muddle fresh ginger in a mixing glass and add the blended Scotch, lemon juice and honey syrup. Fill the shaker with ice and shake; strain into an ice-filled Old-Fashioned glass. Float the Islay malt on top and garnish with candied ginger.

—Jack Bettridge



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Squash

You've seen the pictures: two people dressed in all white, wielding racquets with tiny heads, are locked in a room with high walls, a small red line about 18 inches off the floor on the front wall, and maybe a glass back wall. They whale away at a little rubber ball, while the racquet miraculously misses heads and bodies—well, most of the time. The game is squash. And, if you haven't played, you might consider taking it up as one of the best exercises on the planet.

Historically, the domain of prep schools, Ivy League colleges and the very exclusive men's clubs of the Eastern establishment, squash has gradually gone mainstream. Public facilities have opened in many cities, and courts have appeared outside their former elite bastions. You should be able to find venues today in most places. Furthermore, the game also has been globalized, with one set of rules and type of ball authorized for play. The old rules are arcane. Today's single set makes the game easier to play and enjoy.

The ball's softness makes it easier to return, flattening the initial learning curve. But as your level of play advances, it

becomes more difficult to put away a point in this game, which is played to 11 points scored. (Games must be won by two.)

Get ready to gear up. Greg McArthur, the head squash professional at Sleepy Hollow Country Club in New York, recommends a lighter racquet, about 120 grams, for beginners. Professional squash players, he says, also use 120 to 140 gram racquets, but you can find racquets today up to 150 or 160 grams. The heavier versions may be cheaper, but the lighter, carbon-fiber models are easier on the arms and better for striking the ball. Look for brands such as Harrow, Dunlop and Technifibre, a French brand, which is a new favorite of professionals. Expect to pay \$180 to \$200 for a top-of-the-line model.

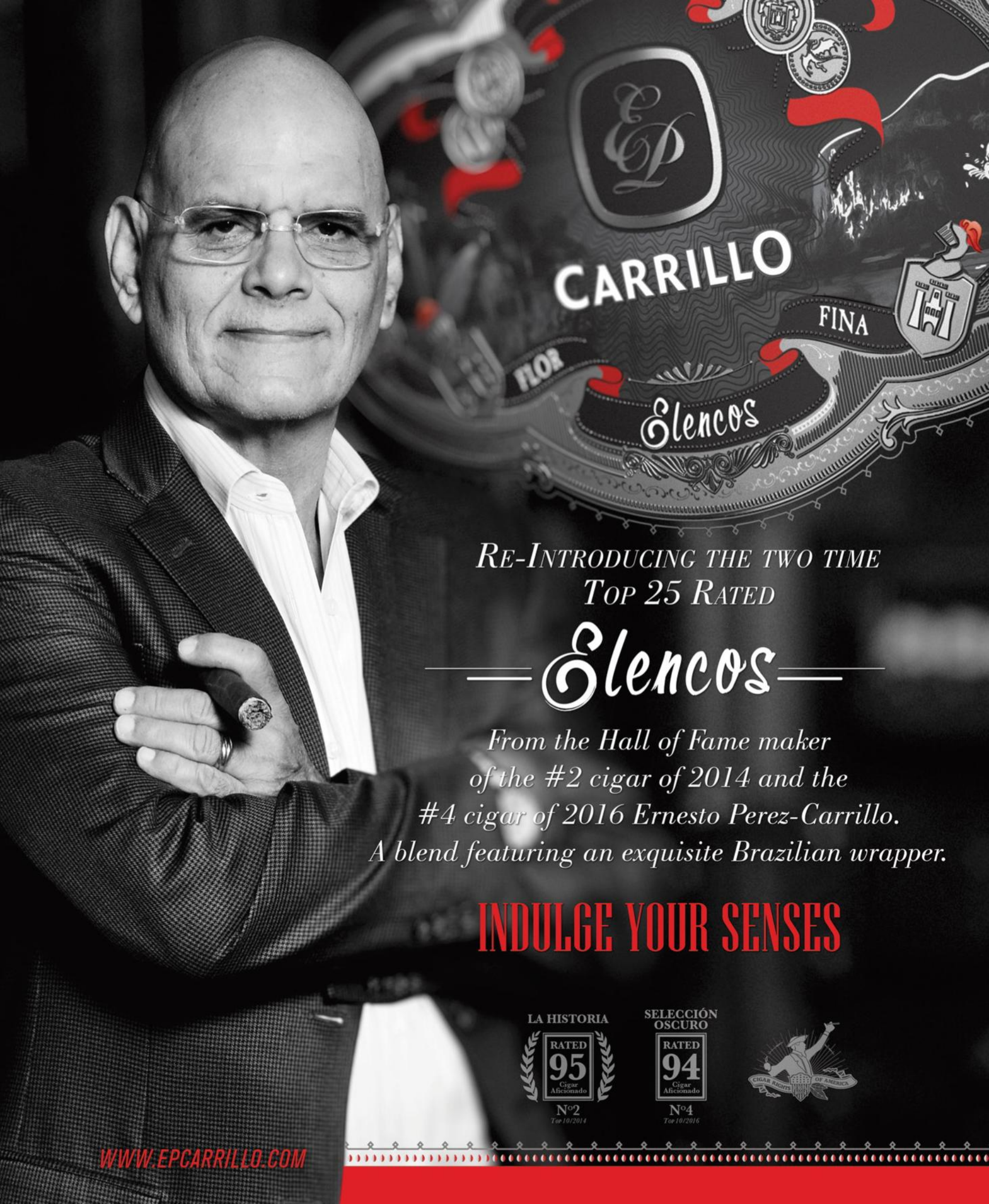
You will not only need a shoe designed for tennis or squash, with solid side support, but some terry cloth wristbands to wipe off your sweat. And then, depending on your weight, get ready to burn 800 to 1,000 calories an hour in a thrilling hour of intense competition in a closed space.

—Gordon Mott

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Montegrappa Cigar Pen

It's fun to fly the flag of the lovers of the leaf with items—like cufflinks and novelty ties—that display cigar images. It's rare that such an item could be mistaken for a cigar or double (actually triple) as a tool. The Cigar pen, from renowned Italian pen maker Montegrappa, is an eerily convincing replica of a cigar with a punch in its tip. For the pen's 20th anniversary, Montegrappa has mimicked the Cuban vitola Laguito No. 2 (a panetela) right down to its dimensions.

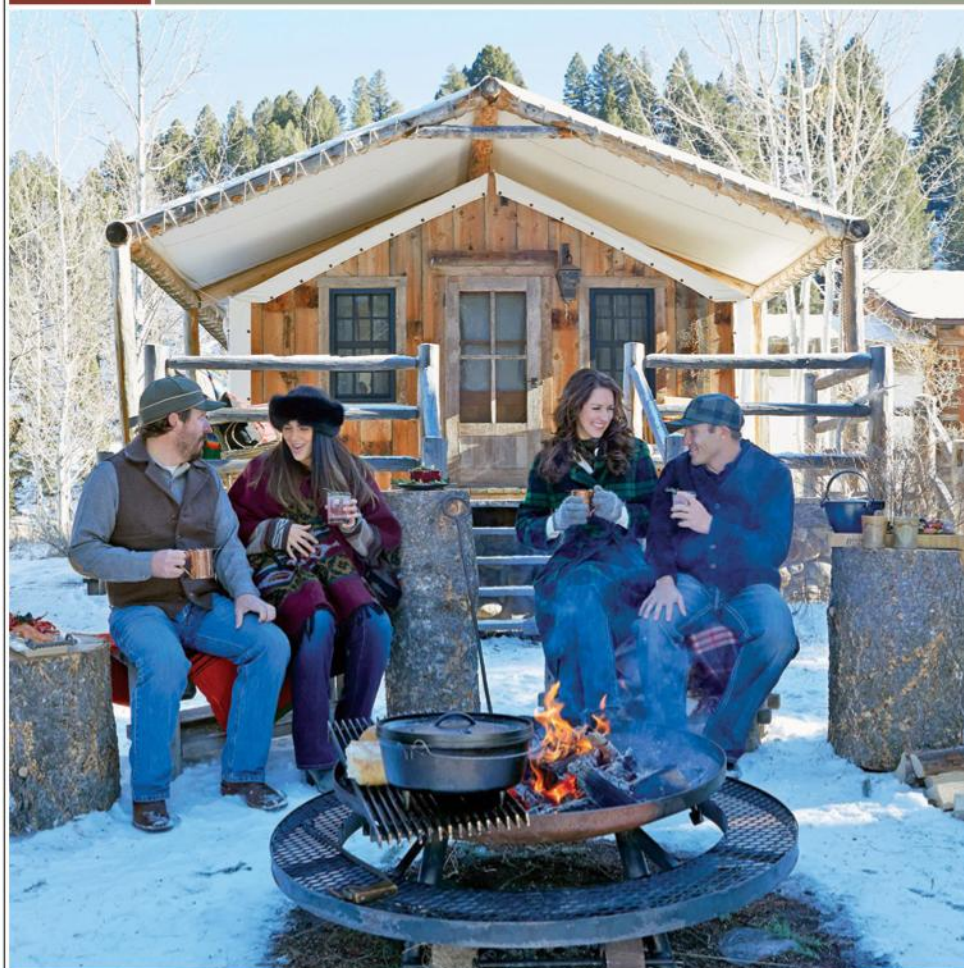
Montegrappa uses the standard tobacco hue (light brown with pearlescent streaks) from its celluloid color library to evoke the appearance of a tobacco leaf. Like a Laguito No. 2 (such as the Cohiba Corona Especial) the pen is 6 inches long by 38 ring gauge. To enhance the illusion, designers dispensed with the pocket clip normally found on a pen. In place of a band is a precious-metal strip with the pen's brand name and the year the company was established. The wooden box is shaped like a tobacco leaf.

Founded in Bassano del Grappa Italy in 1912, Montegrappa is hailed as one of the finest pen makers in the world, regarded for exceptional quality and artistry. The collection features a number of special editions, including a few paying homage to Ernest Hemingway, a famous patron whose characters often smoked cigars.

The Cigar pen comes in either fountain pen or rollerball styles, each with the option of sterling silver or 18K gold trim. In silver, it goes for \$2,250 with a rollerball, \$2,995 as a fountain pen. In gold those prices rise to \$16,200 and \$19,800. In keeping with Montegrappa tradition, the sterling silver versions are limited to 888 pieces and the gold ones are limited to 88. Montegrappa fashions the nibs of the fountain pens from 18K gold, and decorates them with the brand's distinctive filigree pattern.

Visit montegrappa.com

—Laurie Kahle



Winter Glamping

First, summer camping got its makeover. That daunting ritual in which you lug a tent under the stars, devour mac'n'cheese and pray you aren't yourself devoured by mosquitos or bears became glamping. An amalgam of glamor and camping, glamping is for people who want an outdoor experience, but admit to themselves that they prefer a bed with 800-thread-count Egyptian cotton sheets and a screened-in porch to sleeping on the cold hard ground. Now, winter glamping—the cold-weather version—is transplanting the same charms and salvation onto frozen tundra.

Think of it as a real-life version of the Budweiser Clydesdales delivering a cold one directly to your hot tub. That's the idea behind The Ranch at Rock Creek whose bespoke tents make no concessions to the frigid Montana weather. "The tents have heated floors, pellet stoves and attached bathrooms," boasts Erin Paul, a resort representative. "Claw-footed bathtubs are one of our trademarks."

Winter glamping offers different attractions than the summer version. After all, you can't, of course canoe or kayak down frozen streams. And traditional hiking isn't the draw. Instead, at the Ranch at Rock Creek, you cross-country ski, snowshoe, snowmobile, horseback ride, ice fish (in a heated tent, of course) and enjoy après-ski yoga and a granite spa. The travel can—in a sense—actually be easier, since you're not restricted to roads or

trails when everything has a blanket of snow to glide across.

And then there's the solitude. For all its charms, the challenges of summer camping, beyond the heat and biting insects, are the crowds. It's hard to commune with nature when you're sharing it with a Boy Scout troop or a large family working out its issues. Moreover, chances are you're not going to run into a tour group of seniors taking selfies in avalanche country.

The tradeoff comes in plunging temperatures. "There's definitely some suffering involved," admits Adam Berliner, the assistant director of the Bowdoin College Outing Club and an all-season camping expert. But the secret to staying happy and avoiding frostbite, Berliner adds, is layering and a lightweight down parka with lots of "loft," or heat-trapping insulation.

But there are further compensations. Berliner counts among his peak experiences a recent New Year's Eve spent hut camping with friends and a couple of cases of Champagne in the mountain wilds outside Aspen, Colorado.

Winter glamping has its element of romance as well, Paul explains. "In the colder months it's more couples, a more intimate crowd. It's totally cozy."

In an uncertain world, never underestimate the power of cozy. Visit theranchatrockcreek.com

—Ralph Gardner Jr.

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Rocky *RP* *Patel*
Premium Cigars



CIGAR AFICIONADO'S

25

TOP

CIGARS of 2017

Choosing the Top 25 cigars of 2017 was no easy task. Excellent crops, smart blending and exceedingly high-quality cigars across the board made it difficult to pare down a list and choose the best of the best. But the selection process is a careful one. We do not simply review the year's cigars and create a list based on arbitrary or sentimental reasons—that would be entirely too easy. Instead, we choose the highest-scoring cigars of the year and subject them to yet another test by our panel of tasters. They are repurchased at retail, stripped of their identifying bands and blind-tested through multiple rounds of tastings. It's a tournament where the year's best go up against each other to once again prove their merit. Those that couldn't maintain a stellar performance were eliminated. Only the cigars that performed on the highest level, round after round, and at the highest consistency remained.

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF HARRIS





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LIVE GENEROUSLY
AND LIFE WILL TREAT
YOU ROYALLY.

EST. 1939



CANADA



1

Arturo Fuente Don Carlos Eye of the Shark

Occasionally, a cigar comes along that is unique in every way—interesting blend, innovative shape, intriguing story—and, at the same time, can still maintain the classic standards of excellence. This is the case with the Arturo Fuente Don Carlos Eye of the Shark, CIGAR AFICIONADO'S 2017 Cigar of the Year.

The blend is based on the original Don Carlos cigar (which was released in 1976), but altered a bit for this particular release. If you want to know exactly what makes the Eye of the Shark different from the regular Don Carlos line, you're

going to have to use your imagination. The Fuentes are quite guarded as to the particulars of the blend. It's enough to know that the wrapper is from Cameroon and the interior tobaccos are well aged and grown in the Dominican Republic, which is the basic recipe for most Don Carlos cigars.

One puff of the Eye of the Shark, however, and you'll know you're smoking an elevated blend—something comfortably familiar to many Fuente fans, but with a slight twist. People who are familiar with brand owner (and now, company patriarch) Carlos Fuente Jr. know that he blends instinctively rather than by strict formula, especially when creating unorthodox cigars like this one.

The shape adds to the intrigue. Eye of the Shark is neither box-pressed nor conventional. Rather, the bottom half is pressed and the upper half tapers into a regular, rounded belicoso—a demi-press. Fuente has used the shape before, so as quirky as it may seem, it's recurred in

other lines, but only in limited quantities. As for why it's called the Eye of the Shark, it's most likely due to the overall form. If you look at the cigar horizontally, it resembles the body of great white shark.

Once the four corners of the box-pressed foot are fully lit, the Shark begins to express itself immediately. In addition the range of baking spices and citrus notes found in most Don Carlos cigars, each puff communicates additional layers of complexity, kind of like a bonus track to a favorite album or an unexpected epilogue at the end of a classic novel. More intonations of nuts and leather unfold before a warm, lingering finish of cedar and cedar. Simply put: we did not want this cigar to end.

In 2016, Fuente's father, Carlos Fuente Sr., passed away. He was the Don Carlos, and active with the company until the very end. You'll find the words "The Man's 80th" printed lovingly on the side and on the lid of each bright red box. Eye of the Shark was released in 2016 as a tribute to Sr. and his contributions over the years to the cigar world. The Eye of the Shark is CIGAR AFICIONADO'S No. 1 cigar of 2017. Sadly, Sr. is not here to see or receive the accolade, but his spirit is definitely alive in the smoke.



97
POINTS

MADE BY Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia.
FACTORY LOCATION Dom. Rep.
WRAPPER Cameroon
BINDER Dom. Rep.
FILLER Dom. Rep.
DIMENSIONS 5 3/4" By 52
PRICE \$12.25



CARLOS FUENTE JR.

2

Padrón Serie 1926 No. 2 (Natural)

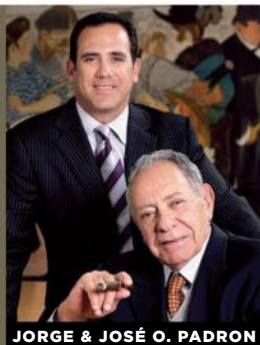


It's important to consider Padrón's résumé before lighting up this resplendent cigar. Padrón has been named Cigar of the Year three times (the current record holder). The Serie 1926 cigar has occupied the No. 2 spot twice. And a Padrón cigar has been in the top 10 ever since CIGAR AFICIONADO has been handing out its Cigar of the Year Awards (since 2004). So the Padrón Serie 1926 No. 2 is more than merely a great cigar—it's a legacy of achievement backed by years of consistency.

The Serie 1926 is named for the birth year of company founder and patriarch José Orlando Padrón, who died at the age of 91 on December 5 (see page 143). It's an all-Nicaraguan blend and one of the most powerful, full-bodied cigars in the entire Padrón portfolio. But Padrón is meticulous in its blending—if the tobacco is strong, it will also show elegance and sophistication. Every puff of the No. 2 reflects this marriage of power and grace from the delightfully earthy core to its rich coffee bean character, all accented by a sweet, underlying woodiness and black tea finish. The smoke is dense, the draw perfect and the cigar emblematic of the inimitable Padrón style José Orlando Padrón perfected over 53 years of making cigars.

96
POINTS

MADE BY Tabacos Cubanica S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Nicaragua
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 5 1/2" By 52
PRICE \$17.70



JORGE & JOSÉ O. PADRON

3

Oliva Serie V Belicoso



Ten years ago, Oliva Cigar Co. released its Serie V, which was the strongest, most full-bodied cigar the company ever created. But it was also impressive in its ability to render layers of richness and complexity in spite of its power. Ten years later, we found ourselves with the same excellent product. It's difficult enough to maintain such quality and consistency, but even more of an accomplishment when you consider this: Oliva has been acquired by a larger company.

In 2016, Oliva Cigar was bought by European cigarmaker J. Cortes Cigars N.V., who wanted a premium brand in its portfolio. Naturally, there were concerns about the Oliva cigars changing and quality suffering. Luckily for the cigar-smoking world, J. Cortes kept Oliva president José Oliva on board after the acquisition, to help ensure that quality was maintained. So far, the change has been seamless and the Serie V remains remarkable for its ability to convey high volumes of flavor, especially at such a low price point.

The blend is centered around strong, ligero tobacco from Nicaragua's Jalapa Valley and a high-priming wrapper to complete the taste profile, which is rich in earth, leather and spice though balanced with a sweet touch of molasses.

95
POINTS

MADE BY Tabacalera Oliva S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Nicaragua
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 5" By 54
PRICE \$8.36



JOSÉ OLIVA

4

Bolivar Belicoso Fino

The Cuban Bolivar brand has long been the choice for fans of stronger cigars. And as more Americans get the chance to sample Cuban cigars (due to the relaxed restrictions on their purchase), Bolivar is often a preferred choice on account of its fuller body. While it isn't one of Cuba's largest brands, it certainly has a very long history and a loyal, international following.

Sadly, there aren't many sizes in the Bolivar portfolio left to choose from, and only two of them are large cigars. There's the Royal Corona, which has previously won Cigar of the Year, and then the Belicoso Fino, a beautifully tapered smoke crafted with a signature earthy core and plenty of sweet, savory notes ranging from salt and nuts to chocolate and graham cracker.

The cigar is indeed strong and earthy, but do not mistake that for crude or rustic—each element of flavor is conveyed to the palate in measured, balanced layers. And, unlike most Cuban cigars, the Bolivar Belicoso Fino comes in both dress boxes and wooden cabinets, which are a bit more difficult to find. For this tasting, we sampled cigars from the slide-lid cedar cabinets, and yes, there was the welcome hint of cedar as well.



94
POINTS

MADE BY Habanos S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Cuba
WRAPPER Cuba
BINDER Cuba
FILLER Cuba
DIMENSIONS 5 1/2" By 52
PRICE £21.60



CUBA

5

Alec Bradley Tempus Natural Centuria

After starting his tobacco career producing mild to medium-bodied cigars, Alan Rubin, owner of Alec Bradley Cigars, decided to try his hand at a full-bodied smoke more than 10 years ago. The result was the Alec Bradley Tempus, a cigar made in Honduras with Honduran and Nicaraguan tobacco. The main focus of the Tempus blend is the wrapper leaf, which Rubin procured from a farm in the Trojés region of Honduras. For Rubin, the wrapper went beyond any generic Honduran flavor profile and imparted a very particular, estate-specific taste. For those who know a Latin phrase or two, the word tempus is Latin for time, and that's exactly what Rubin needed to perfect this blend. It took him years. When he finally finished the cigar, the strength surprised him, but he found that the blend elevated the wrapper, rather than overshadowed it. The blend works particularly well in the Centuria size. Because Centuria isn't a very thick cigar, the wrapper has far more influence on the taste. The overall effect is quite delicious as each puff leaves the smoker satisfied the way a sip of hearty stout would satisfy a beer connoisseur.



94
POINTS

MADE BY Fabrica de Tabacos Raices Cubanas S. de R.L.
FACTORY LOCATION Honduras
WRAPPER Honduras
BINDER Honduras, Indonesia
FILLER Nicaragua, Honduras
DIMENSIONS 7" By 49
PRICE \$8.55



ALAN RUBIN

6



Ashton Symmetry Belicoso

It isn't often that Ashton Distributors Inc. puts out a new brand under the Ashton name, but when it does, the company dedicates an enormous amount of thought and care into the release.

Many years in the making, the Ashton Symmetry debuted in 2014, and the company could not have chosen a better name. If you take a bit of poetic license, you could interpret the word "symmetry" to also mean balance, and this blend is a case study in balance. Symmetry is made in the Dominican Republic by the Fuentes. If you're familiar with Ashton's portfolio, Symmetry falls somewhere in between the VSG line and the Cabinet line in terms of strength. In terms of character, it has all the finesse of an Ashton product, but unlike other Ashtons, the Symmetry contains some Nicaraguan tobacco. This is a first for an Ashton-branded cigar. In this blend, a pristine Ecuadoran wrapper brings together the Symmetry's Dominican and Nicaraguan tobacco for a sublime smoking experience rich in black cherry notes, spicy cinnamon and coffee bean, and that's just on the first puffs. Notes of almond, vanilla and toast continue to unfold all in beautiful balance—or symmetry.

94
POINTS

MADE BY Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia.
FACTORY LOCATION Dom. Rep.
WRAPPER Ecuador
BINDER Dom. Rep.
FILLER Nicaragua, Dom. Rep.
DIMENSIONS 5 1/4" By 52
PRICE \$12.25



ROBERT LEVIN

7



My Father The Judge Grand Robusto

It's big. It's bold. And it's box-pressed. Made by the Garcia family in Nicaragua, My Father's The Judge Grand Robusto can be an imposing cigar, just by way of its girth. This is certainly a powerful smoke, but it isn't just strong for the sake of being strong. There's a purpose to its strength, and plenty of interesting flavor to justify the high-octane tobacco inside.

It starts with an Ecuadoran Sumatra-seed wrapper, two Nicaraguan binders (Corojo and Criollo) and filler from three of the Garcia family farms. My Father the Judge was intended to be a more full-bodied offshoot of the first My Father, and that's saying a lot—the original is no mild blend.

My Father The Judge debuted in 2016 with two chunky sizes. The Grand Robusto is the shorter, fatter of the two—and a reflection of today's smokers who have a large appetite for thick, strong cigars. If high volumes of heavy smoke are what you want, this cigar delivers, with satisfying notes of chocolate and gingersnap driven by an underlying red pepper spice and plenty of nutty character. It burns slow and cool, and while the blend doesn't show much restraint, The Judge has an unforgettable beauty to its brashness.

93
POINTS

MADE BY My Father Cigars S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Ecuador
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 5" By 60
PRICE \$12.40



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8

Guardian Of The Farm Apollo Selección de Warped



What happens when you give two young blenders unbridled access to some of the best Nicaraguan tobacco in the world? The answer is the Guardian of the Farm Apollo Selección de Warped. It's the joint effort of Max Fernández and Kyle Gellis. If you've never heard of them, Kyle Gellis is the owner of Warped Cigars, a small, boutique brand made in Nicaragua at the TABSA factory. Max is the son of Eduardo Fernández, owner of the TABSA factory and, more to the point, owner of Aganorsa, an agricultural conglomerate that is one of the largest growers of cigar tobacco in Nicaragua, and the source of top-quality leaf. Both Gellis and Fernández had a very large inventory of Aganorsa tobacco at their disposal when coming up with this concept—and they did not squander the opportunity. Guardian of the Farm is a tasty smoke that's profoundly nutty in character, showing almond and nutmeg qualities along with hints of cinnamon. It's long and slim and is made with an uncut foot, so the first puffs of the cigar give the smoker a bracing taste of the Corojo '99 wrapper before the rest of the blend kicks in. Guardian of the Farm is named in honor of both Max's and Kyle's dogs—so they had a little fun with the name as well.

93
POINTS

MADE BY Tabacos Valle de Jalapa S.A. (TABSA)
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Nicaragua
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 6" By 44
PRICE \$8.00



FERNÁNDEZ & GELLIS

9

Plasencia Alma Fuerte Generacion V



The Plasencia family has been growing tobacco for five generations, and to this day still provides high-quality leaf to a huge portion of the premium cigar industry. They also make cigars under contract for many clients. But, unless you were in the business, the name didn't resonate with cigar consumers. The father-and-son team of Nestor and Nestor Andrés Plasencia wanted to change that.

Previous attempts to create a brand with their name on it fell a bit flat, but in 2016, they released the Plasencia Alma Fuerte. This time, they got it right. Translated to "strong soul," the blend is indeed full bodied, and it's made with aged tobacco taken from Plasencia's vast library of vintage leaf. While the primary component is Criollo '98, Alma Fuerte is a blend of tobacco from four growing regions: Estelí, Condega, Jalapa and Ometepe. All the tobaccos come together quite cohesively in the Generacion V, a box-pressed Salomon-style cigar full of tapers and curves. As you might expect, the Generacion V requires some time. Cigars of this shape normally take awhile to warm up and begin steady combustion. But once it does, it rewards the smoker with layer upon rich layer of cocoa powder, leather and toast.

93
POINTS

MADE BY Plasencia Cigars S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Nicaragua
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 7" By 58
PRICE \$22.00



NESTOR A. PLASENCIA

10



Villiger La Flor de Ynclan

Known primarily for its massive and venerable machine-made cigar business, Villiger has been determined to create not just a good, but a great premium cigar. It wasn't about the money, as Villiger is already a billion dollar company. It stemmed from owner and chairman Heinrich Villiger's love and appreciation for premium cigars. His company finally achieved greatness with La Flor de Ynclan.

Few might remember this brand's lackluster debut. The cigar was released with little fanfare, and consumer response was lukewarm at best. It was discontinued and, for the most part forgotten—but Villiger refused to let it go. He went back to the drawing board and enlisted the skills of José Matias Maragoto to reblend the Flor de Ynclan from top to bottom. The new La Flor de Ynclan—reblended, repackaged, reimagined—was reintroduced to the market in 2016. Now, the cigar is a fantastic smoke, sweet and charming from first puff to last, anchored by simple-yet-pleasing notes of chocolate and salt, and then refined by more precise intonations of walnut and orange marmalade. It's a welcome change, giving Villiger—which has made cigars since the 1800s—its first entry into CIGAR AFICIONADO's Top 10.

93
POINTS

MADE BY ABAM Cigars S.R.L.
FACTORY LOCATION Dom. Rep.
WRAPPER Ecuador
BINDER Indonesia
FILLER Nicaragua, Dom. Rep.
DIMENSIONS 5" By 50
PRICE \$11.00



HEINRICH VILLIGER

THE TOP 25 AT A GLANCE

1	Arturo Fuente Don Carlos Eye of the Shark Dom. Rep. • \$12.25 • 5 3/4" by 52	97
2	Padrón Serie 1926 No. 2 (Natural) Nicaragua • \$17.70 • 5 1/2" by 52	96
3	Oliva Serie V Belicoso Nicaragua • \$8.36 • 5" by 54	95
4	Bolivar Belicoso Fino Cuba • £21.60 • 5 1/2" by 52	94
5	Alec Bradley Tempus Natural Centuria Honduras • \$8.55 • 7" by 49	94
6	Ashton Symmetry Belicoso Dom. Rep. • \$12.25 • 5 1/4" by 52	94
7	My Father The Judge Grand Robusto Nicaragua • \$12.40 • 5" by 60	93
8	Guardian of the Farm Apollo Selección de Warped Nicaragua • \$8.00 • 6" by 44	93
9	Plasencia Alma Fuerte Generacion V Nicaragua • \$22.00 • 7" by 58	93
10	Villiger La Flor de Ynclan Robusto Dom. Rep. • \$11.00 • 5" by 50	93
11	Partagás Lusitania Cuba • £30.90 • 7 5/8" by 49	93
12	New World Puro Especial Toro Nicaragua • \$9.00 • 6 1/2" by 52	93
13	Archetype Axis Mundi Toro Nicaragua • \$12.00 • 6" by 52	93
14	601 Red Label Habano Torpedo Nicaragua • \$7.95 • 6 1/8" by 52	93
15	Romeo by RYJ Aging Room Sm. Batch F25 Cantaor Dom. Rep. • \$12.50 • 6" by 52	93
16	Rocky Patel Vintage 2003 Cameroon Churchill Nicaragua • \$10.10 • 7" by 48	92
17	C.L.E. Prieto 50x5 Honduras • \$7.26 • 5" by 50	92
18	E.P. Carrillo Dusk Solidos Dom. Rep. • \$9.10 • 6" by 60	92
19	Romeo y Julieta Short Churchill Cuba • £19.60 • 4 7/8" by 50	92
20	Macanudo Inspirado Orange Churchill Dom. Rep. • \$6.99 • 7" by 50	92
21	Regius Exclusivo U.S.A. Pressed Perfecto Nicaragua • \$12.95 • 6 1/2" by 54	92
22	Joya Black Nocturno Nicaragua • \$5.95 • 6 1/4" by 46	91
23	La Flor Dominicana Double Ligero Lancero Dom. Rep. • \$11.20 • 7 1/2" by 38	91
24	Tatuaje Cabinet Noellas U.S.A. • \$9.00 • 5 1/8" by 42	91
25	Undercrown Churchill Nicaragua • \$9.44 • 7" by 48	91



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11

93
POINTS

Partagás Lusitania

The Partagás Lusitania has been around long enough to be considered one of Cuba's iconic and classic cigars. In 2017, it was one of the finest cigars we smoked. But double coronas like the Lusitania require a particularly large, pristine tobacco leaf to fully cover all seven and a half inches of the cigar. Inconsistent crops and poor weather in the last few years have created a bit of a

shortage of large, high-quality wrapper leaf in Cuba. This did not stop Cuba from producing fantastic Lusitanias. Our samples came from a 10-count box with a December 2016 box code, so somehow these lovely smokes have not been plucked up by aficionados in the know. These Lusitanias begin floral and sweet before imparting layers of leather, cedar and almonds.

MADE BY Habanos S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Cuba
WRAPPER Cuba
BINDER Cuba
FILLER Cuba
DIMENSIONS 7 5/8" By 49
PRICE £30.90

12

93
POINTS

New World Puro Especial Toro

There is probably no one in the premium cigar business growing as quickly as A.J. Fernandez. If he isn't purchasing a new factory, he's acquiring new land for more tobacco farms, all the while producing his own cigars as well as some pretty high-profile contract brands. Despite all his activity, he has carefully crafted the New World Puro

Especial. It's the newest version of his New World line and a profound expression of Estelí, Nicaragua, as all the tobacco inside the cigar comes from that town, best known as the cigarmaking capital of Nicaragua but also a source of reliably strong tobacco. Of course, Fernandez didn't do it all alone. He is assisted by his father, Ismael.

MADE BY Tabacalera A.J. Fernandez
 Cigars de Nicaragua
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Nicaragua
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 6 1/2" By 52
PRICE \$9.00

13

93
POINTS

Archetype Axis Mundi Toro

The creative minds at Ventura Cigar and Drew Estate have put their heads together and created the cigar of your dreams—or at least, the cigar of your unconscious. Archetype Axis Mundi is named for the repeating characters, symbols or archetypes said to recur in people's dreams, items that appear in the myths of various cultures. So a cigar was formulated

to appeal to the collective consciousness (and unconsciousness) of all cigar smokers. It's a bit of a lofty, meta-cerebral concept, but the cigar is delicious. The Indonesian binder bridges Nicaraguan wrapper and Nicaraguan fillers to produce rich layers of coffee bean, caramel and nuttiness. A hint of cedar manages to manifest itself as well, making the Archetype Axis Mundi Toro a no brainer.

MADE BY La Gran Fabrica
 Drew Estate
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Nicaragua
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 6" By 52
PRICE \$12.00



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14

93
POINTS

601 Red Label Habano Torpedo

The entire 601 series has gone through a few identities over the years. Different cigar manufacturers have made the cigar, different companies have distributed the brand and the labels have seen more than their share of design changes. The one constant has been brand owner Erik Espinosa, who is now with Espinosa Cigars. Today, Espinosa's 601 Red Label Habano has

finally come into its own, made for Espinosa by A.J. Fernandez in Nicaragua. The 601 brand has always had a strong fan base due to Espinosa's ability to bring a heady, meticulously blended Nicaraguan cigar to the market at a very reasonable cost. (The cigar is one of four cigars on this list retailing for less than \$8.) It's nutty, with a core of wood enlivened by tea, earth and honey.

MADE BY San Lotano Cigars S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Nicaragua
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 6 1/8" By 52
PRICE \$7.95

15

93
POINTS

Romeo By Romeo Y Julieta Aging Room Small Batch F25 Cantar

The House of Altadis U.S.A. and the House of Boutique Blends saw an unlikely union of sorts when they released the Romeo by Romeo y Julieta Aging Room Small Batch F25. The star-crossed brand was a collaboration between Rafael Nodal (co-owner of Boutique Blends) and cigar giant Altadis, which is in control of the iconic Romeo y Julieta portfolio. Altadis decided to let Nodal try his hand at

blending his own version of Romeo. The result was Romeo by Romeo y Julieta Aging Room, made in the Dominican Republic at Tabacalera Palma where the core Aging Room cigars are rolled. Made in small quantities, the cigars use only Dominican tobacco, most of which is from Cuban seeds grown in the Cibao Valley, a region known for its deep topsoil and distinct tobacco.

MADE BY Tabacalera Palma S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Dom. Rep.
WRAPPER Dom. Rep.
BINDER Dom. Rep.
FILLER Dom. Rep.
DIMENSIONS 6" By 52
PRICE \$12.50

16

92
POINTS

Rocky Patel Vintage 2003 Cameroon

There aren't too many cigar brands left made with Cameroon wrapper. It's become quite pricey, difficult to get and most of the high-quality Cameroon grown today is bought before it's even planted. These hurdles have not stopped Rocky Patel from creating his namesake brand: the Rocky Patel Vintage 2003 Cameroon. According to Patel, it's wrapped in a Cameroon cover leaf

harvested from a 2003 crop, so stocks of raw materials are limited, but he was sure to blend the cigar properly. Its mélange of Dominican and Nicaraguan tobaccos serve to showcase and exalt the rare wrapper, which is delightfully sweet-and-sour in character. While Cameroon may seem a bit like an anachronism, Rocky Patel keeps this classic leaf alive, relevant and affordable.

MADE BY El Paraiso
FACTORY LOCATION Honduras
WRAPPER Cameroon
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua, Dom. Rep.
DIMENSIONS 7" By 48
PRICE \$10.10

17



C.L.E. Prieto 50x5

It's tough to mention the name Christian Eiroa in the cigar world without thinking about the Camacho brand his family once owned, but Eiroa has done well for himself on his own, most notably with the C.L.E. Prieto, a broadleaf-covered cigar made in Nicaragua. This may be a bit surprising to those familiar with Eiroa, but there isn't a single leaf of Honduran tobacco in the Prieto

blend. Recall that, along with his father, Julio, Eiroa put Honduran Corojo-seed tobacco on the map. Then again, who's to say he can't expand outside his comfort zone? The C.L.E. Prieto is one of the few cigars on this list with a Connecticut broadleaf wrapper. It's rolled up with Nicaraguan tobaccos and tidily box-pressed into the 50x5, a robusto of exquisite character.

92
POINTS

MADE BY n/a
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER U.S.A./Conn. Broadleaf
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 5" By 50
PRICE \$7.26

18



E.P. Carrillo Dusk Solidos

Fernesto Perez-Carrillo is one of the first people to speak up in defense of thick ring-gauge cigars. He believes that a large cigar gives the cigarmaker more blending freedom—and he's taken advantage of the 60 ring gauge format in the E.P. Carrillo Dusk Solidos. Covered in a Connecticut broadleaf wrapper, it's loaded with Nicaraguan tobacco, which is the main purpose of the cigar. E.P. Carrillo Dusk is a tribute to Silvio

Perez, tobacco grower and former head of A.S.P. Enterprises. Perez introduced Perez-Carrillo to Nicaraguan tobacco, specifically from Estelí. The name of the cigar, on the other hand, is simply a tribute to the time of day Perez-Carrillo prefers when he sits outside to smoke. Its three-country blend elegantly transitions from notes of black pepper and salted nuts to sweeter sensations of graham cracker and raisins.

92
POINTS

MADE BY Tabacalera La Alianza S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Dom. Rep.
WRAPPER U.S.A./Conn. Broadleaf
BINDER Ecuador
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 6" By 60
PRICE \$9.10

19



Romeo Y Julieta Short Churchill

For many years, the Romeo y Julieta Churchill was a classic in the Cuban portfolio. It's still one of the quintessential Cuban cigars, but worldwide distributor and marketing monopoly Habanos S.A. decided it was time to create some offshoots of this well-known standard. Today, Romeo has a regular Churchill, Petit Churchill and Wide Churchill, but the one to look out for is the

Short Churchill. While the others are fine cigars, this year, none impressed us as much as the Short. It's the size of a standard robusto and a complex composition of ripe apple, red wine and sweet toffee, all tied together by a rich, toasty undertone. The flavors are clear and pronounced but not at all overwhelming, nor are they competing for dominance.

92
POINTS

MADE BY Habanos S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Cuba
WRAPPER Cuba
BINDER Cuba
FILLER Cuba
DIMENSIONS 4 7/8" By 50
PRICE £19.60

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I use Boveda.

ROCKY PATEL
ROCKY PATEL CIGARS



For my humidor,
I use Boveda.

ABE FLORES
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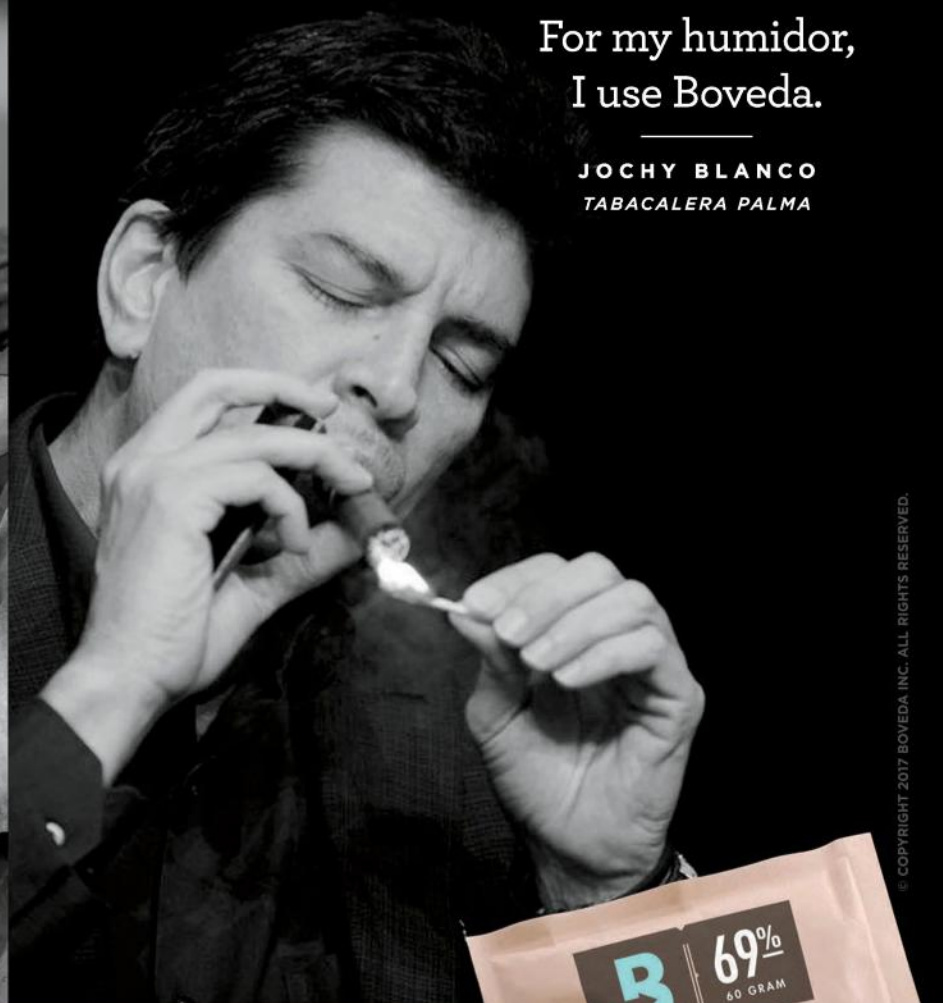
For my humidor,
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LITTO GOMEZ
LA FLOR DOMINICANA



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BEST CIGAR BUYS OF THE YEAR

The best things in life aren't always the most expensive. To prove it, we've assembled a list of high-scoring cigars specifically tailored for the cost-conscious connoisseur. Every smoke on the list below has scored 88 points or higher in our blind tasting reviews and has a suggested retail price of \$6 or less (before taxes). This year, nearly 30 cigars made the cut, impressing our panel with a mix of complexity and character while providing undeniable value. You'll find perennial fan favorites from A.J. Fernandez, Arturo Fuente, Padrón and Tatuaje. There's even a Top 25 cigar showcasing its wallet-friendly price: the Joya Black Nocturno, which retails for a mere \$5.95. While many of the smokes are coronas, petit coronas and other smaller cigars, two 7-inch Churchills make the grade—and all of them are big on flavor.

—David Clough



93 POINTS

Joya Black Nocturno

Nicaragua • 6 1/4" • 46 • \$5.95

91 POINTS

Fonseca Nicaragua Petit Corona

Nicaragua • 5" • 42 • \$4.95

Padrón Londres

Nicaragua • 5 1/2" • 42 • \$4.70

90 POINTS

Arturo Fuente Hemingway Short Story

Dom. Rep. • 4" • 49 • \$5.80

Fonseca Nicaragua Toro

Nicaragua • 6" • 50 • \$5.99

H. Upmann Vintage Cameroon Corona

Dom. Rep. • 5 1/2" • 44 • \$5.50

Oliva Serie O No. 4

Nicaragua • 5" • 43 • \$5.63

Villiger 1888 Corona

Dom. Rep. • 6" • 43 • \$5.70

89 POINTS

A. Flores Gran Reserva 1975 Half Corona

Dom. Rep. • 3 1/2" • 46 • \$5.09

Arturo Fuente Cuban Corona

Dom. Rep. • 5 1/4" • 45 • \$5.05

Arturo Fuente Chateau Fuente Sun Grown

Dom. Rep. • 4 1/2" • 50 • \$5.50

Asylum Premium 44x4

Nicaragua • 4" • 44 • \$5.76

Casa Magna Colorado Pikito

Nicaragua • 4 3/4" • 42 • \$5.95

El Galan Semilla Cubana Habano Churchill

Nicaragua • 7" • 50 • \$5.80

La Aroma de Cuba Corona

Nicaragua • 5 1/2" • 44 • \$5.40

La Aurora 1903 Cameroon Robusto

Dom. Rep. • 5" • 50 • \$5.75

Last Call Maduro by A.J. Fernandez Pequeñas

Nicaragua • 5" • 46 • \$5.70

Punch Elite EMS

Honduras • 5 1/4" • 45 • \$3.79

Punch Gran Puro Nicaragua 4 7/8 x 48

Honduras • 4 7/8" • 48 • \$5.29

88 POINTS

7-20-4 Factory 57 Dog Walker

Honduras • 4 1/4" • 40 • \$6.00

CAO Brazilia Corcovado

Honduras • 4 1/4" • 60 • \$5.99

Don Diego Lonsdale

Dom. Rep. • 6 5/8" • 44 • \$5.14

La Aurora 1495 15 Minute Break

Dom. Rep. • 3 1/2" • 42 • \$4.25

La Aurora 1903 Cameroon Churchill

Dom. Rep. • 7" • 47 • \$6.00

Last Call Maduro by A.J. Fernandez Chiquitas

Nicaragua • 3 1/2" • 50 • \$4.46

Tatuaje Havana VI Verocú No. 5

Nicaragua • 4" • 40 • \$4.50

VegaFina Nicaragua Corona

Dom. Rep. • 5 3/4" • 42 • \$5.78

Viva Republica Advanced Warfare Petit Corona

Dom. Rep. • 4" • 41 • \$5.00



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tobacco region, the Cain Daytona
delivers a solid, but smooth,
medium-bodied taste.

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They become authorities themselves, making their experiences richer,
better informed and more meaningful.

cigar
aficionado

20

92
POINTS

Macanudo Inspirado Orange Churchill

The Macanudo Inspirado line started out as a European exclusive, but eventually made its way to the United States. Once it hit stateside, brand owner General Cigar created two versions: the Black, for catalogs and the Orange, for brick-and-mortar shops. In the context of the Macanudo brand, the Inspirado Orange is far more full bodied than traditional Macanudos. For General, Inspirado Orange is

to represent a new chapter in Macanudo's story and an evolution of sorts. Previous attempts to bring new Macanudos to the market haven't always been successful, but this is the most ambitious Macanudo to date. Brand history aside, it's simply a great cigar that produces a rich, buttery smoke enriched by leather and mesquite qualities and a bright finish of almonds and black pepper.

MADE BY Scandinavian Tobacco Group, Danlí

FACTORY LOCATION Honduras

WRAPPER Honduras

BINDER Honduras

FILLER Dom. Rep., Honduras, Nicaragua

DIMENSIONS 7" By 50

PRICE \$6.99

21

92
POINTS

Regius Exclusivo U.S.A. Pressed Perfecto

Regius cigars have only been available in the United States since 2012, but they've amassed a following. Born in the U.K., brand owner Akhil Kapacee blended his first Regius cigars for the European palate, which is to say, for enthusiasts who mainly smoke Cuban cigars. But over time, he created new blends, and eventually came up with the Regius Exclusivo U.S.A. series, a trilogy of

brands (Red Label, White Label and Blue Label). As the name suggests, Exclusivo U.S.A. is only available stateside. Made in Nicaragua by Plasencia Cigars, the Red Label Pressed Perfecto is a box-pressed figurado full of earthy cocoa notes balanced by a pistachio nuttiness. Both ends of this figurado are closed, so just be sure to cut off the right tip before you light it.

MADE BY Plasencia Cigars S.A.

FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua

WRAPPER Nicaragua

BINDER Nicaragua

FILLER Nicaragua

DIMENSIONS 6 1/2" By 54

PRICE \$12.95

22

91
POINTS

Joya Black Nocturno

Joya de Nicaragua is the oldest operating cigar factory in Nicaragua. It was around well before Estelí's current cigar manufacturing boom and weathered the turbulent Sandinista wars of the 1970s. The building even has the bullet holes and bomb damage to prove it. In all this time, Joya de Nicaragua never made a cigar with a Mexican wrapper before Joya Black. The band is a reflection of Joya's determination

to modernize a bit. Though the quintessential Nicaraguan cigar, the company sought a modern look. It started with Joya Red and continued with Joya Black. With the modern look came a fairly modern blend—Nicaraguan tobacco wrapped in Mexican cover leaf is currently a popular combination. And Joya's is a tasty one. Black cherry and cocoa notes set the tone for leather and nougat.

MADE BY Fábrica de Tabacos Joya de Nicaragua S.A.

FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua

WRAPPER Mexico

BINDER Nicaragua

FILLER Nicaragua

DIMENSIONS 6 1/4" By 46

PRICE \$5.95

23



La Flor Dominicana Double Ligero Lancero

As if the La Flor Dominicana Double Ligero blend wasn't powerful enough, the Lancero size rendered the strong, spicy smoke even more intense. Lanceros might give less smoke in terms of volume, but the thinner ring gauge tends to concentrate the smoke, especially as it flows from cigar to palate during the draw. The cigar is bracing from the very first puff, letting you know that,

despite the skinny dimensions, this is a formidable cigar. Initial puffs are seriously spicy, but the piquancy is balanced by leather and coffee notes—even a sweet hint of honey on the finish. Brand owner Litto Gomez grows the Dominican tobacco in this cigar on his own farms in La Canela, which is dryer and hotter than many other tobacco growing regions in the Dominican Republic.

91
POINTS

MADE BY Tabacalera La Flor S.A.
FACTORY LOCATION Dom. Rep.
WRAPPER Ecuador
BINDER Dom. Rep.
FILLER Dom. Rep.
DIMENSIONS 7 1/2" By 38
PRICE \$11.20

24



Tatuaje Cabinet Noellas

Tatuaje began in Miami in 2003 as a small operation in Miami's Little Havana section. Over time, the small brand, made by José "Pepin" Garcia, gained a very loyal cult following. Today, most of Tatuaje's production has moved to Nicaragua and his cigars have gone well beyond mere cult status. But brand owner Pete Johnson has kept his core line in Miami. Now known as

"Brown Label" among fans, the original sizes are produced in a small factory situated behind the My Father Cigars headquarters in Doral, Florida. It's a quaint little space with a few rolling tables dedicated to making small quantities of Brown Label cigars. The Cabinet Noellas are presented in a slide-lid cabinet, highly aromatic and dense with leather, spice and cinnamon.

91
POINTS

MADE BY El Rey de Los Habanos
FACTORY LOCATION U.S.A.
WRAPPER Ecuador
BINDER Nicaragua
FILLER Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 5 1/8" By 42
PRICE \$9.00

25



Undercrown Churchill

Undercrown by Drew Estate first came onto the scene in 2011. It was supposed to serve as a surrogate smoke for the Liga Privada cigars, which are more expensive and in higher demand. The way the story goes, the rollers at the Drew Estate factory were smoking too many Liga Privadas, so they blended the Undercrown for themselves after they were told to stop depleting the

Liga Privada inventory. They came up with a blend and Drew Estate commercially released it as Undercrown. Naturally, Undercrowns were immediately compared to Liga Privada, but the brand has been on the market long enough to stand on its own. This stately Churchill shows a strong oaky, leathery character finessed by hints of vanilla and a roasted coffee bean finish. ❖

91
POINTS

MADE BY La Gran Fabrica
 Drew Estate
FACTORY LOCATION Nicaragua
WRAPPER Mexico
BINDER U.S.A./Connecticut
FILLER Brazil, Nicaragua
DIMENSIONS 7" By 48
PRICE \$9.44

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THE HOUSE THAT ROARED

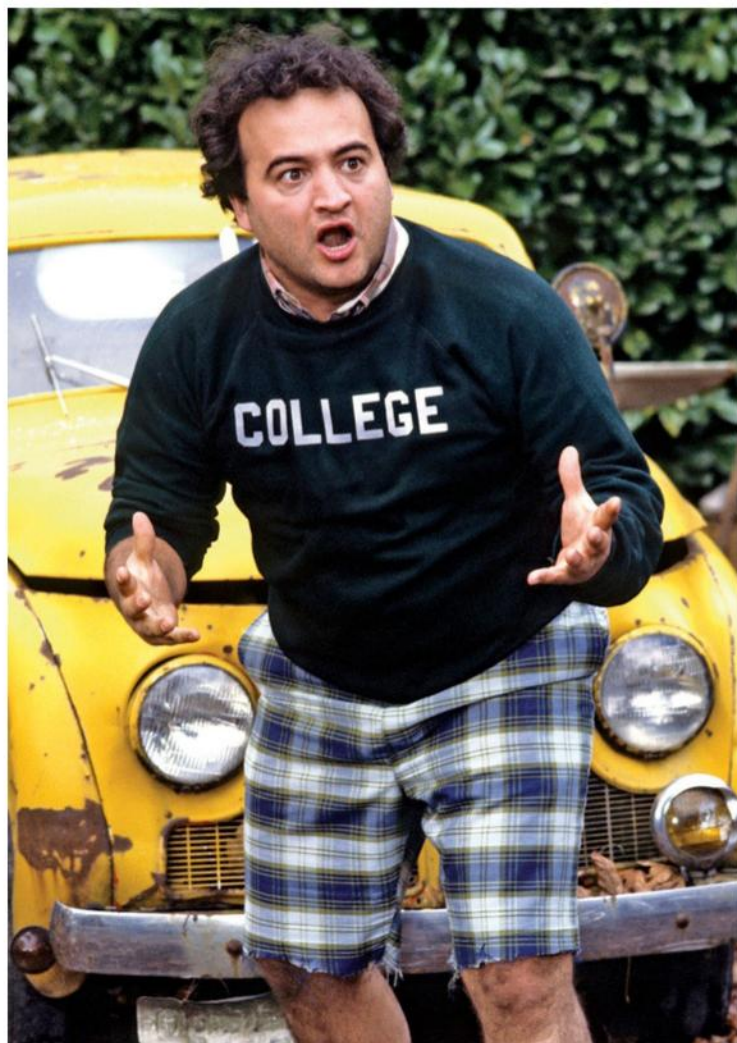
Forty years ago, the delightfully
raunchy and surprisingly charming
Animal House took the world
by storm, changing the world of
comedy forever **BY MARSHALL FINE**



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION



It was the movie nobody wanted to make, a raunchy college tale filled with beer-soaked parties, a dead horse left in the office of the dean and the declaration that “fat, drunk and stupid is no way to go through life.” It wound up as a classic comedy, setting box office marks that will never be topped. But 40 years ago when *Animal House* debuted in theaters, few expected it would be a hit.



John Belushi, in character as the out of control party animal Bluto Blutariski, in the film that made him a superstar. Four years after the 1978 debut of *Animal House*, Belushi would be dead at the age of 33.

Sean Daniel, then a 20-something junior executive at Universal, recalls what Ned Tanen, president of film production, said to him at the time: “This is exactly the kind of movie this company doesn’t produce because it might offend so many sensibilities.”

“If, in 1977 when we were shooting the film, you would have told me I’d be having a conversation with a writer celebrating the 40th anniversary of the film we were making, I wouldn’t have known what that meant,” says actor Peter Riegert, who played Boon, one of the key characters in the film.

“Did I know I was going to be part of something iconic?” says Kevin Bacon, speaking about his first movie role. “I had no idea.”

National Lampoon’s Animal House is one of the most beloved

movie comedies of all time, as well as one of the most successful. The 1978 film was made for a mere \$2.3 million, and became the third highest-grossing movie of the year behind only *Grease* and *Superman*, which was made with a \$55 million budget. Its \$140-million-plus take made it the top-grossing comedy (and the No. 6 film overall) of the 1970s, a decade that included such mega-hits as *Star Wars* and *Jaws*. Adjusted for inflation, the box office haul for the movie today would be almost half a billion dollars.

“For any movie to surpass \$100 million at the box office was very rare in the ’70s, let alone an R-rated comedy,” says Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst at ComScore, a global media measurement company. “It wasn’t just a movie—it was a cultural phenomenon.”

“It created a new language of comedy for the Baby Boom generation,” says Ivan Reitman, one of the film’s producers. “It’s amazing how it’s held on to become an important part of the culture.” And Dan Aykroyd, who was creative partner with the film’s star, John Belushi, calls *Animal House* “the seed that provided a living for a lot of actors, myself included.”

Its popularity translated to critical credibility, starting with its selection to the National Film Registry at the Library of Congress. It was No. 1 on Bravo’s 2013 list of comedies, and No. 4 on a 2014 readers’ poll in *Rolling Stone* magazine of the 25 funniest movies of all time. Pick any list of history’s most hilarious films and you’ll find *Animal House* comfortably ensconced near the top.

“It is a classic because it was superbly done,” says Matty Simmons, the founder of *National Lampoon* and one of the films producers, “and because it was a funny, funny movie. And it will still be funny in 100 years.”

The Crazy But Lovable Deltas

Set in 1962 at fictional Faber College, an Ivy-ish school that resembled the Dartmouth of that era, *Animal House* focuses on Larry Kroger (Tom Hulce) and Kent Dorfman (Stephen Furst), freshmen who are visiting fraternity houses during Rush Week. After being treated like dirt at the snobby Omega House—where the dress is coat-and-tie and the refreshments are punch and cookies—they head for Delta House. “I heard Delta’s the worst house on campus,” says Kroger.

They enter the ramshackle frat house on the heels of Belushi’s Bluto, the house’s resident force of nature. He snatches a bottle of beer that comes flying through the air, and a second smashes against the door. “Grab a brew,” he says. “Don’t cost nothing.” Delta House is home to a crew of lovable, beer-swilling hell-raisers led by the skirt-chasing Otter (Tim Matheson), his quip-spouting pal Boon (Riegert), the gearhead D-Day (Bruce McGill) and Bluto. They take college only as seriously as necessary to shield them from the adult world.

The Deltas accept Larry and Kent as pledges, renaming them Pinto and Flounder, and the fraternity brothers spend the rest of the film ignoring their studies and fighting for the right to party against the snooty Omegas and their oppressive overlord, Dean Vernon Wormer (John Vernon). There are food fights and toga parties, road trips and all manner of unrepentant mischief. When a particularly sadistic Omega named Douglas Neidermeyer (Mark Metcalf) bullies Flounder during ROTC, the Deltas get

The Deltas, the film's unlikely heroes. Played by, from left, Bruce McGill, Tim Matheson, Peter Riegert, John Belushi and James Widdoes.



“My advice to you, is to start drinking heavily.”

—BLUTO



even by helping Flounder hide Neidermeyer's horse in the Dean's office—with spectacularly funny results. So the Dean enlists the Omegas in a scheme to put the Deltas on “double secret probation.” When the Omegas foil a Delta scheme to cheat on an exam, the Delta house GPA falls so low that Dean Wormer kicks the fraternity off campus. But the Deltas make one last stand by disrupting the college's homecoming parade in the grand finale.

As the cool, calm and ever debonair Otter says after he and his brothers have all been expelled, “This situation absolutely requires a really futile and stupid gesture be done on somebody's part.” Bluto responds, “We're just the guys to do it.”

“The Funniest Thing I've Ever Read”

Animal House was born out of concern. *National Lampoon* magazine, created in 1970 by alumni of the *Harvard Lampoon*, was a phenomenon by the mid-1970s, but the irreverent monthly began hemorrhaging talent when TV producer Lorne Michaels swooped in and cherry-picked writers and actors from the humor magazine for the new late-night TV show he was creating for NBC that would become “Saturday Night Live.” Matty Simmons feared that his magazine was losing its best writers to the more lucrative platform of television. When founding editor Douglas Kenney threatened to leave because he was burnt out, Simmons tantalized him into staying by saying, “You can't leave now—we're going to make a movie!”

Reitman, a young Canadian producer at the time, had suggested making a movie to Simmons, and became a producer. Kenney teamed with Harold Ramis, a Second City alumnus and former *Lampoon* radio and stage show cast member, and they wrote a wild

sex-and-drugs comedy about Charles Manson in high school. Simmons insisted they age the characters up to college and added Chris Miller to the mix, whose short stories about his days in a wild Dartmouth fraternity in the early 1960s were one of the *Lampoon* magazine's most popular features. The trio built their story around Miller's tales of debauchery as a member of Dartmouth's original animal house, the Alpha Delta Chi fraternity. Several of the character names were actual nicknames of Miller's frat brothers, including Otter, Flounder and Pinto, Miller's own handle.

None of the writers had ever read—let alone written—a screenplay. As Ramis explained in a documentary that accompanied the 2003 DVD rerelease of the film, “Ivan gave us copies of a paperback of the script of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. He said, ‘This is how a screenplay looks.’ That was all we knew. None of us had been to film school or written a script before.”

Once the script was in place, the film needed a director. Reitman wanted to direct, but, given that his last film was a Canadian quickie called *Cannibal Girls*, that idea was a nonstarter with the studio. At the time, Daniel's then-girlfriend was working as script supervisor for a raucous sketch-comedy film, *Kentucky Fried Movie*, and came home every night to tell Daniel about the hilarious doings on the set that day. He watched some dailies, which were funny enough that the film's brash young director—John Landis—caught his attention. Daniel and Mount gave him the script.

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"It really was the funniest thing I'd ever read," says Landis. Riegert was particularly taken by the horse scene, in which Flounder is handed a gun to take revenge on the beast that has tormented him throughout the film. The kind-hearted Flounder can't harm an animal, so he shoots the gun in the air—and the horse promptly drops dead of a heart attack. "I was reading it one night before I went to sleep," says Riegert. "And when the horse died, I literally fell out of bed laughing."

The first script reflected Miller's original stories and included the kind of cheerful sexism and casual racism that were a hallmark of the *Lampoon* humor. It also had plenty of puke. "Yeah, there was a lot of projectile vomiting in the first script," says Landis, who got the writers to take it out. Landis worked with the writers, trying to focus them on a crucial idea. "My biggest contribution was telling them, 'You have to like somebody in this movie' because, initially, everyone was mean to everyone else," Landis says. "I introduced the basic concept of good guys and bad guys. Delta had to be a home, a brotherhood. We put all of the positive things into the loser fraternity. The elitism, racism, classism, anti-Semitism—we put that into the other house, the Omegas."

"John saw that it was about making the Deltas people you loved," says Daniel. "It was a crucial insight to why it ended up working."

The secret, says McGill, is that the raucous, cheerfully dirty comedy is actually an old-school approach in modern disguise. "It's a classic form," says McGill, who was doing Shakespeare in the Park in New York when he was cast as D-Day, the mustachioed, motorcycle-riding partner-in-crime to Belushi's Bluto. "I don't want to be the snobby old classicist but, really, *Animal House* closely follows Aristotle's *Poetics*, in terms of the consistency of character, time and place," McGill says. "This film was a pure period piece, about a protagonist and an antagonist, with a happy resolution."

The fact that the story is set in 1962, a cultural cusp, just before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the generational upheaval that seemed to explode with the American arrival of the Beatles, gave the filmmakers license to insert jokes about attitudes of the time and about huge cultural changes that lurked in these characters' immediate future.

Says James Widdoes, who played mild-mannered Delta fraternity president Robert Hoover, "They were very specific that they wanted this to take place before the Kennedy assassination, which was a seminal moment, the end of an era." Adds Landis: "I found it extremely political. No one else seemed to notice that this was about the real beginning of the '60s—that the film ends in civil insurrection and anarchy."

The movie gave a group of young actors an early break, including cinematic first-timers like Karen Allen and Bacon. "I'd never met a person who had made a film," says Allen. Bacon was a 19-year-old



The Delta's chief nemesis is Dean Wormer (top right), played to perfection by veteran actor John Vernon. Above, Widdoes (as Hoover) and Belushi (as Bluto) swear in new pledges in Delta style.

"Fat, drunk and stupid is no way to go through life, son."

—DEAN WORMER



waiter taking acting classes when he was cast, and was such a newbie that he waited to get in with the crowd at the New York premiere until one of the other cast members on the red carpet spotted him and plucked him out of the line. "To be flown across the country and taken to be part of this beautiful chaos that is film production—it was overwhelming," says Bacon, who played

Chip, an Omega freshman who tries in vain to calm the chaos in the film's final scenes. "I felt like I was looking into the future. I felt like, 'This is where I'll spend my life.'"

For Matheson, who began acting as a kid on shows like "Leave It to Beaver" and "My Three Sons," the film offered a chance to break out of the TV track to which he seemed confined. "Until then, most of the directors I'd worked with were 20 years older than me, and here was one that was younger than I was," Matheson says. Still, Matheson had to convince the producers he was right to play Otter, the smooth-talking ladies' man: "They wanted me to play one of the Omegas," he says. "I'm not that self-assured guy that Otter is, but I had a sense of the character. When I auditioned with Peter [Riegert], we just hit it off and I stayed in the running."

Landis had a casting brainstorm for Dean Wormer, the film's villain: TV producer and actor Jack Webb, best known for the archetypal TV cop show, "Dragnet." He even had lunch with Webb, who smoked cigarettes and drank a Martini while Landis pitched him; then Webb politely turned him down. So Landis hired John Vernon, who he'd just seen as the villain in Clint Eastwood's *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.

Chateau de la Fuente the Buzz is Blue!

"I wanted to produce
something I remembered.
I wanted to go back to my
childhood. I wanted to go back
to the happiest moments of my
life. I wanted my grandfather
to be proud of me. I wanted my
father to be proud of me and
my children to someday be
proud of me. It was something
I had to do."

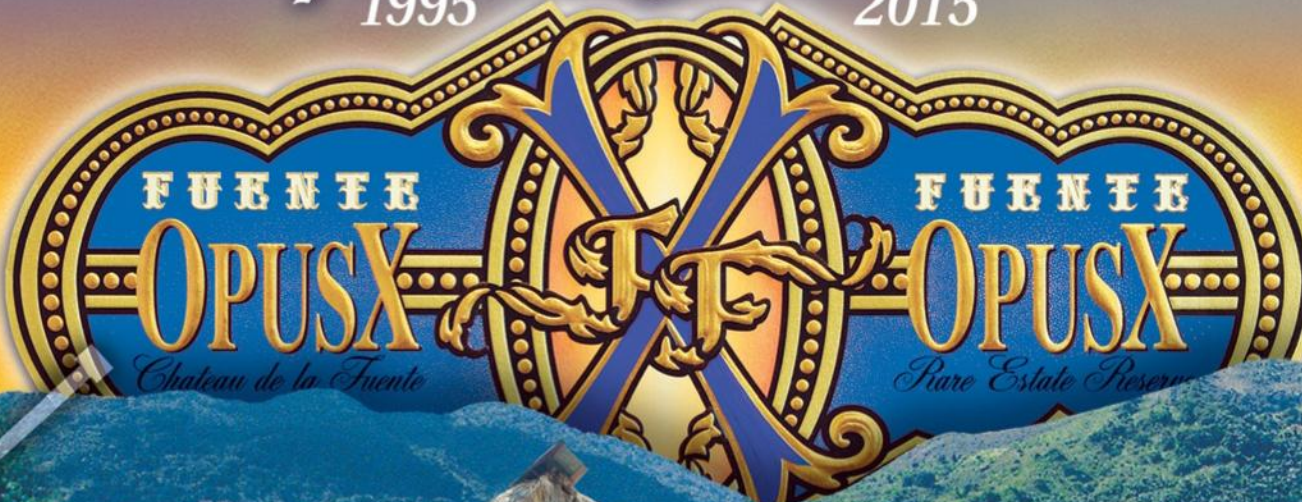
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Birthplace of a Dream

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The studio wanted another big name. “You get me a fucking movie star,” Tanen yelled at the director, so Landis reached out to Donald Sutherland, a personal friend, who was about to film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, in San Francisco, and convinced him to come to Eugene, Oregon, for a couple of days to film scenes as Professor Jennings.

The writers had, in many cases, far different actors in mind as they worked on the script: Chevy Chase as Otter, Bill Murray as Boon and Dan Aykroyd as D-Day, joining his SNL partner Belushi, who was playing Bluto. Simmons, still smarting from the earlier *Lampoon* defections, said, “This is not a ‘Saturday Night Live’ movie—it’s a *National Lampoon* movie.” Aykroyd, under pressure by Michaels to stay at SNL because Belushi was already set, honored his obligation and passed up the film.

But the main attraction obviously was Belushi: “I made the comment that at the center of any great *Animal House* is a great animal—and the three of us looked at each other and said, ‘Belushi!’” Chris Miller told *Entertainment Weekly* in 1998.

Belushi (see sidebar, page 87) was the breakout star of the film. From his impersonation of a zit in the campus cafeteria, his smashing of a folk player’s guitar at the toga party and his inspirational (if misguided) “Germans bombed Pearl Harbor” speech, his role, at its best moments, required a silent-comic performance that could still convey the outsized impulses of Bluto.

“For a guy with not that many lines, he steals the movie,” Widdoes says. “When he’s window-peeping on a ladder at the sorority and he looks back into the camera—the first time I saw that with an audience, I had never heard such a big laugh at a film. Everybody just lost it because they were so not expecting that.”

McGill was often teamed with Belushi in scenes. He recognized that his best approach was to engage but also to support. “I thought, ‘Don’t try to out-Belushi Belushi,’” he says. “You’re the straight man, so just stand back and take him in.”

While they were shooting the film in the fall of 1977, Belushi divided his time between *Animal House* in Oregon and “Saturday Night Live” in New York. He’d fly to Oregon on Sunday to be on the set Monday through Wednesday, then board a plane back to New York for rehearsals Thursday and Friday, and the live Saturday show. He’d hop a jet back to Oregon on Sunday to start the cycle all over again.

Belushi already had a reputation for the appetites—for food,

drink and other intoxicants—that would eventually kill him. But he was on his best behavior in Oregon. Landis put Belushi and wife Judy in their own house, away from the cast’s late-night shenanigans, so he could be rested for the grueling schedule.

“Belushi was so amazing to be around,” Matheson says. “He’d done so much comedy. He was this constant anchor in the scenes, saying, ‘Good work.’ He couldn’t have been more supportive.”

“John was really very conscious that the rest of the cast were all actors,” Widdoes says. “That fueled him. None of us were sketch comics; we’d all trained as actors.”



Director John Landis (left) taking a break on set with McGill and Belushi. *Animal House* was his third film, and his biggest hit.

The Fight

Once casting was complete, Landis had all the Deltas come to Oregon a week ahead of everyone else to rehearse, choose costumes and get into character. “I hadn’t gone to college,” says Matheson, “so that movie was my college experience.” Part of that experience was a trip the actors took to a fraternity party just before shooting began. Like the people they would soon portray onscreen, trouble found them.

A group including Matheson, Riegert, McGill, Widdoes and Allen found themselves ushered up the stairs in a palatial frat house at the University of Oregon, where the movie would be filmed. They ran into a wave of fraternal hostility. So they decided to leave. Widdoes, who played the cautious and worrying Hoover on screen, escalated the situation as the rest of the actors were trying to leave when he was confronted by an angry student. “He was saying things like, ‘You Hollywood fags think you can come up here and steal our women’ and I kind of lost my cool,” Widdoes says. “I knocked the beer cup out of his hand and the beer went flying.”

Riegert: “What I remember most is how quickly it had deteriorated.”

“All of a sudden, all these guys just came at us in a wave and I thought, ‘I’m dead,’” says Matheson, who ended up at the center of a beating.

“I remember seeing Tim in a corner, crouching down, his hands covering his head while people were whaling on him,” says Riegert. “We were outside and Karen started yelling and walking back toward the house and I put my arm around her and said, ‘I think you’re going the wrong way.’ And then suddenly I was being pounded in the back of the head. Somehow we got out of there.”

“I saw Bruce coming back for me and he said, ‘Just don’t run or panic,’” says Matheson. “Then we both got knocked down—and we looked at each other and said, ‘We gotta run!’ And we beat a hasty retreat. McGill saved my life.”

“We all got out alive,” says Widdoes. “But we got whooped.”

“Was it over
when the
Germans bombed
Pearl Harbor?”
—BLUTO



The Shooting Star JOHN BELUSHI

John Belushi could reduce audiences to tears of laughter with a well-timed waggle of one expressive eyebrow. While he had blown up on TV as a founding 1975 cast member of “NBC’s Saturday Night” (later called “Saturday Night Live”), what Belushi really wanted to do was make movies. Just before *Animal House*, he’d played a smaller role in *Goin’ South*, a film directed by and starring Jack Nicholson, and complained to his brother, Jim, about how dissatisfied he’d been with the experience.

But *Animal House* was different. He was working with screenwriters who were friends and longtime colleagues from *The National Lampoon* stage and radio shows. They understood the comic dynamo that was Belushi, and created a film to harness that comedic power.

“The part was built for him by the writers,” says Judith Belushi Pisano, his widow. “When people read the script, a lot of them were underwhelmed at the role of Bluto as it was written. It would say, ‘Bluto opens the door’ or ‘Bluto goes to the cafeteria.’ To the casual reader, it wasn’t clear who Bluto was. But if you knew John was going to be Bluto, you knew it would be great.”



Karen Allen, who played Katy in the 1978 film, says those few words would be taken a long way by Belushi. “There would be a sentence in the script—‘Bluto runs across the lawn,’ and it would wind up as a five-minute bit in the film.”

At that point, Belushi was like a comedy rocket. As younger brother Jim says, he was like a shooting star, “something that makes you go ‘Wow!’—and then it disappears.”

John Belushi started his own improvisational comedy group in college, which led to a spot in the cast at Second City. There, Belushi made connections with Harold Ramis, Bill and Brian Doyle-Murray and, later, Dan Aykroyd. That start led him to be cast in the *National Lampoon: Lemmings* stageshow and then “Saturday Night.”

After filming *Animal House* Belushi returned to “SNL” with the seeds of *The Blues Brothers*. He and Aykroyd turned the R&B act from a warm-up bit for the “SNL” broadcast into a big-budget studio comedy, and both of them left the TV show in 1979 to pursue full-time movie careers. Belushi, however, only made two more films—*Continental Divide* and *Neighbors*, both of which came out in 1981—before he died of a drug overdose on March 5, 1982. He was 33 years old.

Now, more than 35 years after Belushi’s untimely death, the movie image of him that lives on is Bluto in *Animal House*, silently making the audience into accomplices when he window-peeps at a sorority house.

Jim Belushi recalls watching *Animal House* on TV when his oldest son, then a toddler, happened to walk into the room while one of John’s moments of physical comedy was on: “He couldn’t take his eyes off John,” Belushi says. “He laughed at everything John did. We both did.”

—MF




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The Deltas bonded during the fight. The entire cast was housed at a Rodeway Inn, but by the time the actors cast as the Omegas arrived on location, the Deltas were so close-knit that they treated the Omegas as the enemy. McGill's room at the Rodeway Inn became Party Central—for the Deltas. But the actors who played the Omegas were never invited. To fuel the anger of his Neidermeyer character, sergeant at arms for Omega House, Metcalf had his room placed directly over McGill's so that, as he sat and worked on lines each night, the sound of the party came thumping through the floor.

"Many of us knew each other before the film. Bruce and Peter and I were drinking buddies in New York," Metcalf says. "And we went back to that relationship after the movie. But the characters were so well-etched that we do all still relate to each other in that way, to some extent."

Animal House was a small studio film, and the studio treated it with about the same respect given the Deltas by the Omegas. Landis had requested a large camera crane mounted on the back of a truck, but it was taken back a day early. "They needed it for an episode of 'The Incredible Hulk,'" Landis says. He and his crew scavenged and repurposed settings, props and costumes, taking a DIY approach to meet the 30-day shooting schedule. Landis' future wife, Deborah Nadoolman, who was the film's costume designer, came up with the film's most iconic garment in a moment of inspiration.

"She used press-on letters on a sweatshirt and put the word 'COLLEGE' on it—she made that up," Landis says. "She held it up to me and said, 'Do you think this is funny?'"

The prickly Tanen was supportive of Mount and Daniel, even if the executive didn't really get the film: "He told me, 'Everyone in this company hates this script. That really makes me know we should make it,'" Daniel says. "He liked to stick it to people. He gave us \$2 million and said, 'Go away and come back with a movie. And keep your head down.'"

Hints Of A Hit

Most of the cast members were too inexperienced to understand what a rare experience they were having. But the veteran who played Dean Wormer got it. "John Vernon was the only person who took me aside and said, 'I think this movie is going to be a big hit,'" Landis recalls. "He said, 'I'm serious—and I want to thank you for letting me be part of it.' It was quite a moment."

The exposed film was sent from the shoot site in Oregon back to Hollywood to be developed, so executives could review the daily footage. When the *Animal House* dailies started coming in,



Pinto and Bluto (Hulce and Belushi, right) in Dean Wormer's office.

word began to spread. "The dailies were funny and the head of post-production was laughing at them," Daniel says. "He told some of the other old-time guys. By the time they'd filmed the 20th day, the screening room for the dailies was full of executives, laughing their asses off."

As he worked on the film in the editing room, Landis seemed to know what he had. "We started getting these wonderful two-sentence letters from John that said things like, 'You have no idea how funny you are,'" Widdoes recalls. Adds Martha Smith, who played "Babs" Jenson, "He'd send little postcards that said, 'We are making a classic.'"

Tanen, however, was unconvinced. When the producers and Landis finally screened the finished film for him, he watched silently, then stopped the projector after the scene where Otter is lured to a hotel room and beaten by the Omegas.

"Is that funny?" he demanded. "I don't think it's supposed to be funny," Daniel offered. Tanen fumed: "Ask your director. Is that scene funny?" Landis now took a turn: "No, but it's not meant to be funny."

"So," Tanen said, voice rising, "we're making comedies that are not meant to be funny?" He stalked out.

By the time of the first preview in the early summer of 1978, Landis knew the pressure was on: "We were all very nervous," he says. "We screened it in Denver, for a truly virgin audience that had no idea what it was going to see. And it was just amazing, rapturous and rowdy and loud. I had a small tape recorder because I wanted to tape the response—and I

"I can't believe I
threw up in front
of Dean Wormer."

—FLOUNDER

"Face it, Kent,
you threw up ON
Dean Wormer."

—BOON



Stephen Furst (left) played the eternally harrassed and ever awkward Flounder, seen here taking a spit-laden tongue lashing from Mark Metcalf's aggressive character Douglas A. Neidermeyer.

immediately ran out to the lobby and called John Belushi and played the tape for him over the phone."

Riegert remembers a similar phone call: "I said, 'What is that?' And Landis said, 'That's the sound of a cash register!'"

Editor George Folsey Jr., recalls, "It was so raucous at the end of the movie that I actually was scared. I thought it might turn into a riot." In the studio's eyes, Landis says, "We went from war criminals to heroes."

Well, almost. After the Denver screening, Tanen took Landis aside to express concern about the film's road-trip scene, in which the Deltas wind up as the only white patrons in an African-American roadhouse. "Ned was convinced that there were going to be race riots across America because of that scene," Landis says. Luckily, Mount had overseen several films by comedian Richard Pryor; he asked Pryor to come in and watch the film as a favor, to see whether it pinged his highly attuned antennae.

Afterward, Pryor sent Tanen a note: "Ned—*Animal House* is fucking funny. And white people are crazy." The scene stayed.

The film's success was virtually instantaneous. Riegert and his girlfriend went to the Sutton Theater in Manhattan a few days after the film opened and were amazed when the theater's employees spotted him and yelled, "Boon!"

They let him stand in the back of the sold-out theater. "That's when I knew this film was going to be a monster," Riegert says. "I thought they were going to rip the seats out of theater. I had never experienced laughter like that."

Universal quickly shifted gears, expanding from a limited release to a much wider one. The film shot to No. 1 in the weekly

"Seven years of college down the drain."
—BLUTO



box-office rankings, then stayed there for more than two months. It spawned a renewed craze of toga parties at colleges around the country, even as Belushi appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* under the headline "College Humor Comes Back."

When *Animal House* was released in 1978, the average movie-ticket in the United States cost \$2.34. Today it's more than triple the price, \$8.95. A box office tally of \$140 million in 1978 prices meant there was significant repeat business: "The true impact of a movie is measured by how many times people felt compelled to see it," says box office analyst Dergarabedian. "People obviously went back to see *Animal House* a lot."

The Brain Behind The Animals DOUGLAS KENNEY



"Everybody thought the Stork was brain damaged" is the line introducing Douglas Kenney's character in *Animal House*, but the movie's co-writer was far from that. From his Harvard days through the co-founding of *National Lampoon* magazine to motion picture triumphs he was a comedy comet, who would inevitably burn out and fall to earth.

The son of a tennis pro turned corporate exec, Kenney grew up in a Cleveland suburb, an experience he would later mine

for comedy gold. In college, he joined the campus humor magazine, *Harvard Lampoon*, and wrote a spoof on Tolkien: *Bored of the Rings*. On graduation, he and two other alumni took it to another level with the scathing *National Lampoon*, which skewered everyone from the right to the left. Nothing was sacred: they tastelessly sent up sex, civil rights, feminism, childhood, hip culture, even animals. (One cover famously threatened "If you don't buy this magazine, we'll shoot this dog.")

Kenney wrote the lion's share of the magazine in drug-fueled sessions that were sometimes followed by erratic absences. *Animal House* was a cinematic lure to keep him onboard.

He bit and penned the script with Harold Ramis and Chris Miller. Of the three, Kenney was the only one with no fraternity background. But he loved the sensibility and poached characters from his 1964 high school yearbook parody created with P.J. O'Rourke. Kenney's small acting part was nevertheless packed with significance when in the climatic scene he steals the drum major's baton and leads the marching band down a blind alley. To alter the movie's tagline, it challenged Hollywood's rules, and the rules lost.

Next came *Caddyshack*, for which he was a writer and producer. His Hollywood stock soared with its boffo box office. Yet, critical pans depressed Kenney, and he descended deeper into drugs and bizarre behavior. On a restorative vacation in Hawaii, he fell from a cliff. Ruled an accident, his death has been also termed a suicide. Ramis would quip that Kenney "probably fell while he was looking for a place to jump."

—Jack Bettridge

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Where Are They NOW?

At the close of the movie, *Animal House* spoofs *American Graffiti* with an epilogue that includes Bluto as a future senator, Boon and Katy married (and quickly divorced), Neidermeyer fragged in Vietnam and Otter as a Beverly Hills gynecologist. Here's what really became of some of the players and principals.



Kevin Bacon



Donald Sutherland



Karen Allen



Tim Matheson



Peter Riegert

Kevin Bacon (Chip Diller)

A minor part in *Animal House* (the preppy Omega freshman) launched what would become the most successful acting career among the cast members. Bacon followed his first movie appearance with minor film and television work before being a standout in *Diner*. His breakout leading-man performance came in the 1984 hit *Footloose*, in which he used 1980s dance moves to combat a fun-hating preacher played by John Lithgow. Solidly on the "A" list, he nevertheless pursued dark and quirky supporting roles as well. The 59-year-old is still among Hollywood's busier actors, recently appearing in *Patriot's Day*.

Donald Sutherland (Prof. Dave Jennings)

From *The Dirty Dozen* to *MASH* and *Kelley's Heroes*, Sutherland was already a bankable star when he was cast in the small, but charming role of the discontented, pot-smoking professor who memorably moons the camera. From *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to *Ordinary People* to *Backdraft* and the more recent *Hunger Games* series, Sutherland remains busy at 82 and received an honorary Oscar last year.

Karen Allen (Katy)

Karen Allen made her film debut in *Animal House* playing one of the few sober characters. She struck the big time, however, in 1981's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, as the hard-drinking Marion Ravenwood, who joins Harrison Ford's Indiana Jones on a globe-spanning adventure. Allen dialed back her acting career after becoming a mother and later started her own textile company, but remains active. She appeared in a 2008 *Indiana Jones* sequel and in 2016 starred in *Year by the Sea*.

Bruce McGill (Daniel Simpson "D-Day" Day)

Sporting one of the longest resumes on the *Animal House* list, Bruce McGill (67) seems to be everywhere these days, from the big screen (*Lincoln*), the small screen ("Blue Bloods," "NCIS") and even voice work ("Family Guy" and "The Cleveland Show"). His roles now tend to be establishment heavies rather than social outsiders.

Tom Hulce (Lawrence "Pinto" Kroger)

Having made his name as a stage actor, Hulce played the baby-faced Pinto. In 1985 he was nominated for an Oscar for his portrayal of Mozart in the film *Amadeus* and later played the ne'er-do-well son in *Parenthood*. In the '90s, Hulce left film to pursue stage directing and production. He last appeared onscreen 10 years ago in *Jumper*.

Tim Matheson (Eric "Otter" Stratton)

The man who played the devil-may-care Otter Stratton would later co-own *National Lampoon* magazine from 1989 to 1991. He returned to the National Lampoon family with a role in 2002's *Van Wilder*, then took a more serious turn as the president in the 2016 TV movie "Killing Reagan."

Peter Riegert (Donald "Boon" Schoenstein)

A regular on all manner of television shows, Riegert took a very un-Boon role as the crooked politician Assemblyman Zellman on "The Sopranos." Zellman ends up crossing Tony Soprano, who whips him with his belt.

James Widdoes (Robert Hoover)

While the portrayal of the wonky frat president Hoover did a fair amount of acting work, his standout roles have been behind the camera. He began directing in 1998, including 142 episodes of the mega-TV hit "Two and a Half Men."

Mark Metcalf (Douglas C. Neidermeyer)

Metcalf recreated the sadistic, spitting authoritarian Neidermeyer in a Twisted Sister video in the 1980s, and has played varied parts on television and film, including the over-the-top Maestro in "Seinfeld."

James Daughton (Gregory Marmalard)

Daughton's character (the slimy president of the rival fraternity) would go on to prison time as a Watergate coconspirator. One of the actor's later roles was equally as ignominious: he challenges Fonzie to jump the shark on TV's "Happy Days."

John Landis (director)

The director added several other standout comedies to his resume—*The Blues Brothers*, *Trading Places*, *Coming To America*—then found himself at the center of controversy in 1982, when three actors were killed on the set of the movie *Twilight Zone*. Landis was found innocent of criminal charges. He later directed the landmark video for Michael Jackson's "Thriller" and has done extensive work producing television shows.

Ivan Reitman (producer)

One of Hollywood's most successful producers, Reitman was behind such hit comedies as *Ghostbusters*, *Twins*, *Kindergarten Cop* and *Old School*, as well as the George Clooney drama *Up in the Air*. The 71 year old is still busy today.

The Dearly Departed



John Belushi 1949–1982 (John "Bluto" Blutarsky)

Whether he was slashing the set asunder as a samurai on "Saturday Night Live" or doing cartwheels in a black suit in *The Blues Brothers*, John Belushi was a comedic force that could not be ignored. He was a star before and after *Animal House*, and kept the

frantic schedule of a man on borrowed time, appearing in seven films on the big screen between 1978 and 1981. He died in 1982 at the age of 33. (See sidebar, page 87.)



John Vernon 1932–2005 (Dean Vernon Wormer)

The actor behind the sadistic Dean Wormer was born in Canada, and had already established himself as an onscreen authoritarian when he was cast in *Animal House*. He kept busy in films and television up until his death in 2005. His latest work, voicing

a part in the 2008 animated film *Delgo*, was released posthumously.

Harold Ramis 1944–2014 (cowriter)

After cutting his teeth with *National Lampoon* magazine and television's "SCTV," Ramis turned to screenwriting with *Animal House*. He would go on to pen such comedy classics as *Caddyshack*, *Stripes* and *Ghostbusters*. Ramis directed as well, with *National Lampoon's Vacation* and *Groundhog Day* among his many credits, and displayed his talents in front of the camera as well. He died at 69 from complications with vasculitis in 2014.



Stephen Furst 1954–2017 (Kent "Flounder" Dorfman)

Stephen Furst delivered pizzas complete with resumes and headshots before being cast in *Animal House*, where he portrayed the hapless but pivotal character Flounder. He had some later success in TV, appearing on "St. Elsewhere" and "Babylon 5,"

and died last year from complications of diabetes at the age of 63.

—Jack Bettridge and David Savona



How do you react to a threat from the rulers of the college? Throw a raucous toga party, top. D-Day and Bluto trying their best to convince Flounder (above) to shoot the Dean's horse.

The reason for the repeat business was the quality of the product. The film was outrageously funny, it was hilariously rude, and it was deceptively smart in its use of nostalgia for an innocent period as a way to inject it with subversive '70s humor.

"Everybody was in their 20s, including the director and the producers," Reitman says. "This film resonated with the Baby Boomers; it was the first film to really do that in comedy. Comedies prior to this had been created, really, for the World War II generation."

Says Mount, "Every young person chafes at authority—and this movie says, 'Resist authority.' It's one of the great anti-authoritarian movies. It speaks to everyone who even momentarily wanted a walk on the wild side." Says Daniel, "This was a very political movie that was all about rebellion. I felt we made a movie about the '60s without making a movie about 'the '60s."

Aykroyd, who would go on to work with many of those involved in the film, says, "It was the gateway to a new anarchic generation of comedy."

Folsey, who subsequently edited and produced several of Landis' films, points to the film's emotional appeal, which goes far beyond its raucous humor. "There's an underlying sweetness in the way the Deltas love and support each other," Folsey says. "Everybody thinks the film is going to be so



raunchy, but what separates it from all the movies derivative of it is a general feeling that these guys care about and support each other. There's a bond created by the Deltas that an audience really responds to. I think that gives it its longevity."

The Animal House Legacy

The influence of *Animal House* can be seen in a subsequent wave of films that seemed to follow its template, such as *Porky's*, *Revenge of the Nerds*, *American Pie* and *Old School*. "It's one of the most copied films ever, and it created the R-rated comedy," says Landis. "Honestly, I'm not thrilled with a lot of what followed."

The film's success boosted careers in all directions. "It probably made it possible for me to work in films, which was something I'd never thought about," says Allen. Smith says all the cast members "got courted by agents." Actor DeWayne Jessie took it a step farther. In the film, he played singer Otis Day, whose R&B band, the Knights (which included future blues legend Robert Cray playing bass), shows up at the Dexter Lake Club and at the Delta House



The cast who played the Deltas (left, next to props from the film's closing scene) formed a close bond during production. DeWayne Jessie (above) changed his name to Otis Day after the movie's release.

shindig where they play "Shout," a song that went on to define generations of parties. After the film's success, Jessie officially changed his name to Otis Day and began to tour with his own version of Otis Day and the Knights, something he still does. "Overnight I went from being DeWayne to being Otis," he says. "It changed the course of my career."

The film also inspired endless encounters with fans in subsequent years who were sure that the filmmakers had, somehow, mined the viewers' own experiences for the movie.

"I've had literally thousands of people come up to me and say, 'That was my school that film was based on,'" Landis says. "I can't tell you how many people have said, 'I knew a guy exactly like that when I was in college.'"

There are hit comedies every year, but few with the staying power to be a perennial favorite 40 years after its release. A kind of sacred text to the Baby Boom generation that was its target audience, *Animal House* has won a devoted following among each generation that followed. As Matheson notes, "There's a new crop of college students every year. And every year, somewhere, there's a father who says to his kid, 'You've got to see this before you go.'" Adds Riegert, "It's a celebration of 'Who gives a shit?' When you're young, you feel immortal and that's how these characters behave."

When *Animal House* was released 40 years ago, nobody could have anticipated how celebrated it would be four decades later. But some had inklings.

"I do remember thinking, while we were making the film, 'What if this is the most successful project I'm ever in?'" Riegert says. "And, really, it probably was. You don't replicate a success like this very often." ♦

Contributing editor Marshall Fine is critic-in-residence at The Picture House Regional Film Center in Pelham, N.Y.

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But on this sunny Southern California day at his studio in San Marcos, California, he has something a little different to show for his hands-on approach. After the introductory handshake in the lobby of his headquarters, he points to an upper front tooth that is now rather like a fang.

"I was hand-stamping a putter last night and a shard flew off and broke my tooth," he says. "I need to go to the dentist later. Going to a show in Japan on Friday. Need to look my best."

He would soon be off to the Hamamatsu Seaside Golf Resort in Japan for the annual Scotty Cameron Museum & Gallery Festival, a testimony to the appeal of his putters and the appeal of the man. You've reached cult status when you have your







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own museum and gallery in Japan. The man and his putters had to look their best. And that's the key for Cameron, who is as much an artist as he is technician. His brand is built around precisely milled putters, some of which retail for thousands of dollars.

When it comes to putters and putting, Cameron is everywhere. His putters are in the hands of some of the most visible and successful players on the PGA Tour. Justin Thomas, Jordan Spieth and Rickie Fowler are among the game's elite who wield his handcrafted putters with great success. Three of the four majors in 2017 were won with his putters. David Duval shot a 59 with one. Bernhard Langer won the 1993 Masters with one.

And, of course, there's Tiger Woods. He achieved monumental success with Scotty Cameron putters, dropping long putts again and again during his dominant run in the late 1990s and early 2000s, pushing the Scotty Cameron brand to the top of the heap in the process.

So what is it about Cameron, and this extraordinary success he has created from humble hunks of metal?

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That, says Cameron, is what it's all about: Love of the game, love of the pursuit of perfection. In a soft, deliberate, measured voice, the putter maestro speaks about the pursuit of truth. The truth about the putting stroke, the truth about the bedeviling implement itself, truth about the science that goes into the art of putting.

Cameron was introduced to club tinkering by his father when he was just a boy growing up in Southern California. While his dad was more into classic clubs, the swinging implements, young Cameron took to putters, the club that gets the ball in the hole.

"My father was an insurance investigator, a one or two handicap, and he liked to tinker on clubs and we had a workshop in the garage," says Cameron, sitting in the high-performance studio of his complex in San Marcos,

California. "He loved persimmon woods, old Tommy Armour deep-faced drivers. When I was 11, Ram-Zebra came out with a cool putter with interchangeable weights, the grip and the head cover matched the grip. As my father liked woods, I took a liking to putters."

The pursuit of the perfect putter, says the 55-year-old, is attributable directly to his dying father.

"As my father was ailing, I remember one of the nights he said, 'stick with the game of golf. I think you have a future,'" says Cameron. "He died when I was 13. I continued to make putters in my garage through high school and early parts of college. I would make them for my buddies on the mini-tours."

Cameron has come a long way from that garage. Today he has a facility in San Marcos where his artisans handcraft all of his custom models, as well as two foundries where he oversees the more mass-produced putters that go out with the Titleist brand, all bearing the Scotty Cameron name. The more mass-produced putters still can cost you \$300. The custom putters can go for as much as \$14,000.

Cameron's pursuit of putting perfection is a long, complex undertaking, stemming in no small part from his thoughts about becoming a pro golfer in the early 1980s. He determined he wasn't good enough—and as much as anything, putting was holding him back. The essential question was, why would that be?

"I was always intrigued with how the putter swung," says Cameron. "You've heard all the stories—it should be square to square, there is an arc to it, what's the truth? There's loft to it. Didn't make any sense to have any loft, you want it along the ground, you don't want it in the air. What's true?"

The journey to answering this question was long, but was fueled by his undying passion for the putter. It ultimately led to the conclusion that the purest putter was made of the purest material and that hand milling a putter out of a piece of steel rather than casting a putter out of molten metal would produce the purest contact, the truest roll. It took years (and more than a few bucks) for him to figure it all out, to convince the best players in the world that what he had discovered was true. It also took him stints with several different club and putter companies,



Cameron's Newport Putters

Maxfli, Ray Cook, Mizuno, Cleveland. All the while he was inspired by iconic putter maker T.P. Mills, who hand-milled his putters.

Cameron eventually was able to put together an elaborate high-speed camera with a computer-driven system that would show him precisely what happens when the putter hit the ball, and, ultimately, what type of putter was best for each individual player.

“You read books and everybody has a different story. You needed the facts about what the ball has to do, what the truth is about the putting stroke,” says Cameron. “So I ended up developing a system of high-speed video to find out what I was after—what the golfer did to the putter and what the putter did to the ball. It was absolutely amazing, the findings, what truly happened.”

Among his surprising findings, he discovered that there really needs to be loft on a putter—ideally four degrees—so the golf ball doesn’t get stuck in the grass on initial contact, which would delay and corrupt its roll. Developing this system helped Cameron figure out what was awry in his own putting.

“When I had a new putter I made for myself I putted great for about two weeks. Then I’d start analyzing it, what I didn’t like about it,” he says. Then his advantage became a disadvantage. “I would always say how could I get the ugly out? Was it too big? Was it too shallow? And start thinking so much about the putter, then I would start to putt poorly. I would give them away to friends. I would analyze everything to the hilt instead of working on putting. It wasn’t until I built my first studio and could answer all my questions that I have now become a good putter.”

Today, Cameron is a two-handicap who plays upwards of three times a week, with Wednesday rounds dedicated to testing different putters and grips.

Cameron established his own company to produce his putters in the early ’90s and combed the PGA Tour to find players who would use them and buy into his story. He got a big break when Bernhard Langer used one of Cameron’s putters to win the 1993 Masters.

To make converts, Cameron also took a close look at the putters made by an industry legend. “Karsten Solheim [the founder of Ping] made phenomenal putters,” says Cameron. Pings were cast, made from molten metal, unlike Cameron’s putters that were milled from solid metal. “When you liquefy the metal, when it cools down, sometimes air pockets don’t escape,” claims Cameron. “They have craters, from the air pockets settling in. I took a Ping putter, doing it for Payne Stewart, he wanted the face milled—cutting the face flat. Doing that to some of the Ping putters I found there is a porosity, air pockets throughout the face.”

Cameron’s method was different. “My deal was by taking a block of steel and milling the putter out of that block you can have no pin holes, no air pockets, no voids in the face area,” he says. “That was more my spiel, spreading the word [that] we can make it truer, more pure, control the weight. To mill it from a block of steel is very expensive.”

It was his association with noted teacher and television



“As my father was ailing, he said ‘stick with golf. I think you have a future.’ He died when I was 13.” —Scotty Cameron

commentator Peter Kostis, and his association with Tiger Woods’ childhood coach John Anselmo, that eventually catapulted him into the putter stratosphere.

“Scotty had a garage operation at the beginning of his career,” says Kostis. “He produced quality products. T.P. Mills did garage putters that were hand-milled and customized. Scotty was duplicating what T.P. Mills was doing. T.P. was close to retirement. The putters that both of those guys made were highly sought after, highly customized to the individual and I liked the products that Scotty made.”

At the 1993 Western Open, Kostis and Cameron were having a chat, one that would turn Cameron’s career on a decidedly upward climb.

“I’ve been involved with Titleist for quite some time and I realized they were expanding into the club business and all they had was the old Bulls-Eye putter,” says Kostis. “So they desperately needed a fresh line of putters and Scotty desperately needed some



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financial backing and business acumen if he was going to get bigger. He was okay running a small business, but he wasn't good running a big business. I thought the two would be a perfect marriage."

Kostis mentioned Cameron to Wally Uihlein, president and CEO of Titleist parent Acushnet Co., who met Cameron and forged a deal. "I'm still waiting for a nice Latour or nice bottle of wine from Scotty for this," jokes Kostis, "but he's slow to pay."

Uihlein draws a great distinction between putters and other golf clubs. "Putters are not golf clubs," he says. "Putters are ball 'on the ground,' whereas golf clubs are ball 'in the air.'"

Uihlein, who is retiring in January, had much to do with expanding the Cameron brand, and was a driving force in Cameron's patenting of his high-speed video system and many other elements of the design and build process of his putters.

"If you look back at those putters that have had any sustained traction," says Uihlein, "they were originated and first brought to market by the individual who inspired the product. Putters are less a laboratory invention but more a performance and artistic work of inspiration. We recognize this product category reality, and it was this appreciation for the putter category as an independent entity that contributed to Scotty being comfortable with the association with Titleist."

And putters are highly personal. It's Cameron's deep personal connection to the putter that Uihlein sees as the key to his extraordinary success.

Uihlein's deal with Cameron was a major step in his rise to stardom, but it was Uihlein's signing of the wunderkind, Tiger Woods, to play and endorse Titleist products, that sent Cameron through the roof.

When Cameron was trying to become a pro golfer (he went to Orange Coast College but never graduated) he took some lessons from John Anselmo, who at the time was teaching the young Woods. Cameron played at the Navy Golf Course in Los Alamitos, and he would see Tiger, who was about nine years old at the time, playing with his father Earl. "I would get a lesson from John and I would see Tiger and say hello," says Cameron.

That hello would eventually turn into getting a Scotty Cameron putter into Woods' incredibly talented hands when he was a junior. After a sensational amateur career in which Woods used several Cameron putters, he turned pro in 1996 after his second year at Stanford and he signed with Titleist. At the Las Vegas Invitational that fall, Cameron arrived with a battery of different putters, knowing by this time that Woods was extremely finicky



Woods wielded a Cameron putter for 11 years, winning 63 PGA victories, 13 majors and \$87 million.

about his flatsticks and had a keen sense of its feel and weight. Using one of them, Woods won his first professional tournament—the 1996 Las Vegas Invitational—in a playoff with Davis Love.

In 1999, with Woods sputtering in the putting statistics, Cameron built a Newport 2 putter early in the week of the Byron Nelson Classic. A FedEx truck was waiting at the door for Cameron to finish it, which included a last-minute weight adjustment that required drilling two small holes into it to reduce its weight and filling those holes with red machinist ink, which in itself became part of the Cameron esthetic. Woods shot 61 in the opening round but couldn't keep the run going and finished seventh.

This model would become the basis for the Newport 2 putter that Woods used to such dramatic success. Right after the tournament, Cameron provided him with another one, made with pure German stainless steel. Woods wielded it for 11 years, winning 63 PGA Tour victories, 13 major championships and cashing checks for \$87 million.

"Tiger is a genius athlete," says Cameron. "He would come in at least twice a year and he knew something was off, but he couldn't pinpoint it." That's where Cameron's video system came in. Woods would look over his putts, again and again. "He would look on the screen and say 'That's it,'" says Cameron. "Within 15 minutes he could fix it with one stroke."

It didn't hurt business that there were a million camera views of Woods putting beautifully with the Scotty Cameron stamping in full focus. One of those viewers watching was a kid in Dallas named Jordan Spieth.

"For me, I was a huge Scotty Cameron putter fan well before I was able to get any," says Spieth. "Back before I was 10 years old I would be with all the juniors at the club I grew up at and we would look online at pictures of Tour players with their Scotty Camerons and their head covers, Tiger being the most famous one."

As Spieth's accomplishments as a junior player accrued, he came to the attention of Cameron and his staff, and visited the Cameron operation when he was 15. His teenage signature is there today on a series of autograph boards in the Cameron studio along with many of the game's greats.

"I was nervous going in," says Spieth, who was awed by the high-tech lesson he received while testing putters. "I was hitting with a putter I liked that was rolling the best and they said 'it is yours, let's go stamp it.'"

Spieth didn't meet with Cameron on that first visit, but he felt his presence. "I was told that Scotty was in a window watching me

putt and that made me nervous right there,” says Spieth, who met Cameron himself on his second visit. “He watched a lot of putts, didn’t say much, asking me how I liked my putter. I wasn’t even in college yet and I was getting to meet this guy I looked up to, admired for what guys were able to do with his putters over the years.”

Spieth still has that first putter, and used a Scotty Cameron models to win a Masters and U.S. Open in 2015 and the British Open in 2017. He has a story about one of them that went missing.

“In late 2015 I see online there is a putter of mine for sale going for something like \$8,000 on Ebay,” says Spieth. “They said it was one I used to win a tournament, which wasn’t accurate. I sit there and think, these [Scotty Cameron] guys have done so much for me and they might think I sold this to a shop. I found out where the shop was.” Spieth found the number and called the shop, via Face-time, demanding to know how they ended up with one of his putters. It turns out it was taken from a wall where he had hung some of his putters as art. “Someone who had been over to the

Unlike Spieth, Thomas was not working well with the Newport model. “He came in here and said I’m having trouble with alignment. We had a new mallet out—the Futura— because it’s sort of futuristic looking,” says Cameron. “We could see with his Newport style he didn’t line it up very well. When he got something bigger with more definite lines, the difference was dramatic.”

Cameron’s philosophy has been to get his putters in the hands of the best players, and with their success, success trickles down to him—though it has been more of a torrent than a trickle. At the



Justin Thomas

place I lived where I hung all these putters up on a wall...It was the friend of one of my roommates. I called him, it was a big ordeal.”

Spieth then called Cameron to explain. “I was really nervous,” he says, and he began apologizing. But Cameron was understanding. “Do you know how many of my putters are for sale online?” Spieth remembers Cameron telling him. “I know you are not struggling for five grand. Don’t think for a second I thought that was your fault.”

Justin Thomas is both friend and rival of Spieth and also a Cameron putter user. His player-of-the-year 2017 season was accomplished using a Scotty Cameron Futura putter developed for him at the start of the year. Thomas shot a 59 in winning the Hawaiian Open and won his first major championship, the PGA.



Jordan Spieth



Bernhard Langer

Superstars Jordan Spieth (above) and Justin Thomas (far left) wield Scotty Cameron putters to great effect. Bernhard Langer (left) won the 1993 Masters with one, the putter’s first major victory.

Scotty Cameron retail gallery in Encinitas, California the average Joe looking for way-above-average gear can have his stroke analyzed with a high-speed camera system just like the pros and have a putter custom made to his specifications. Replicas of Spieth’s or Rickie Fowler’s putters will set you back around \$8,500.

Golfers can also custom design their own putter on the Scotty Cameron website, which allows a highly detailed process and access to the full range of his cult-status flatsticks. “Once a week we offer, online, eight putters that sell from \$2,500 to \$14,000,” says Cameron. “We sell them in eight minutes.”

Cameron continues to hone the craft that has served him well for more than 30 years, milling himself a dream career out of a block of steel. ❖

Jeff Williams is a CIGAR AFICIONADO contributing editor.

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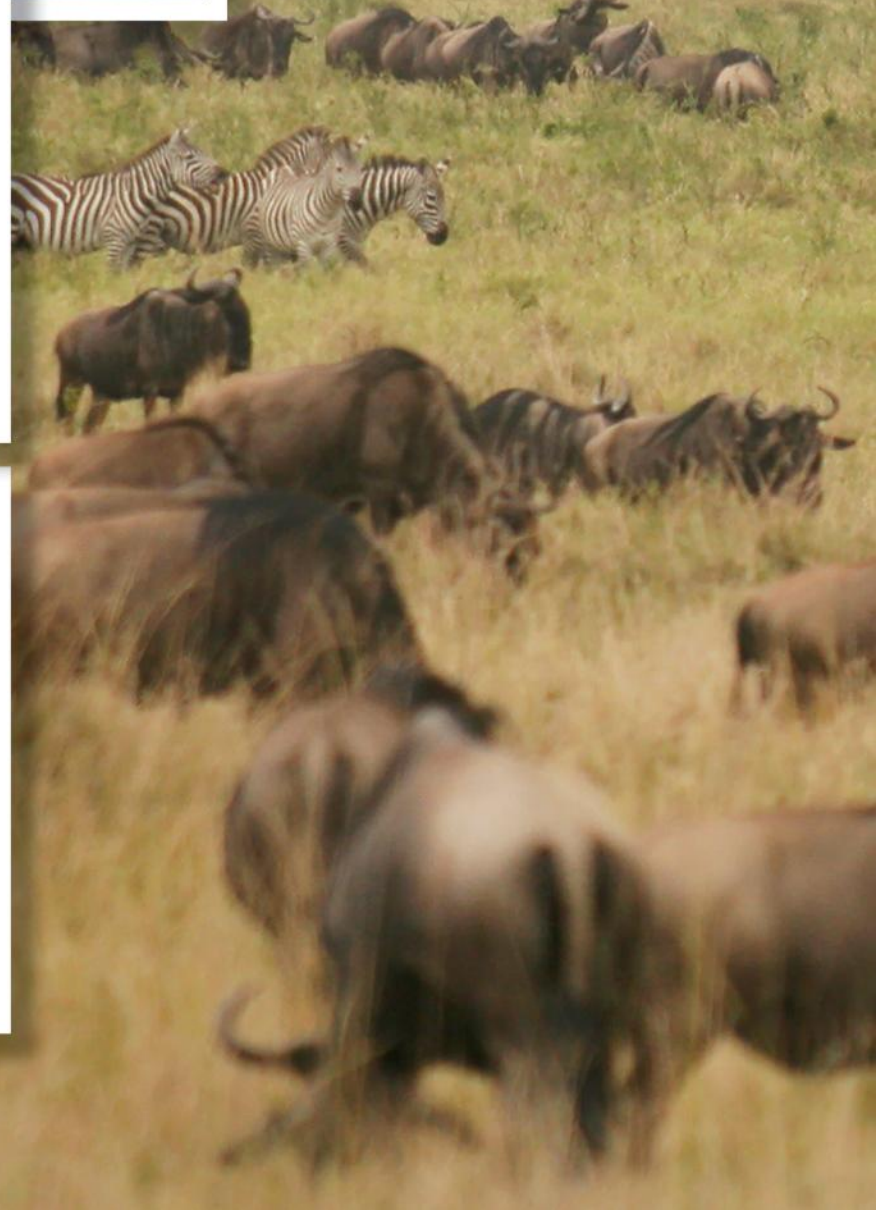
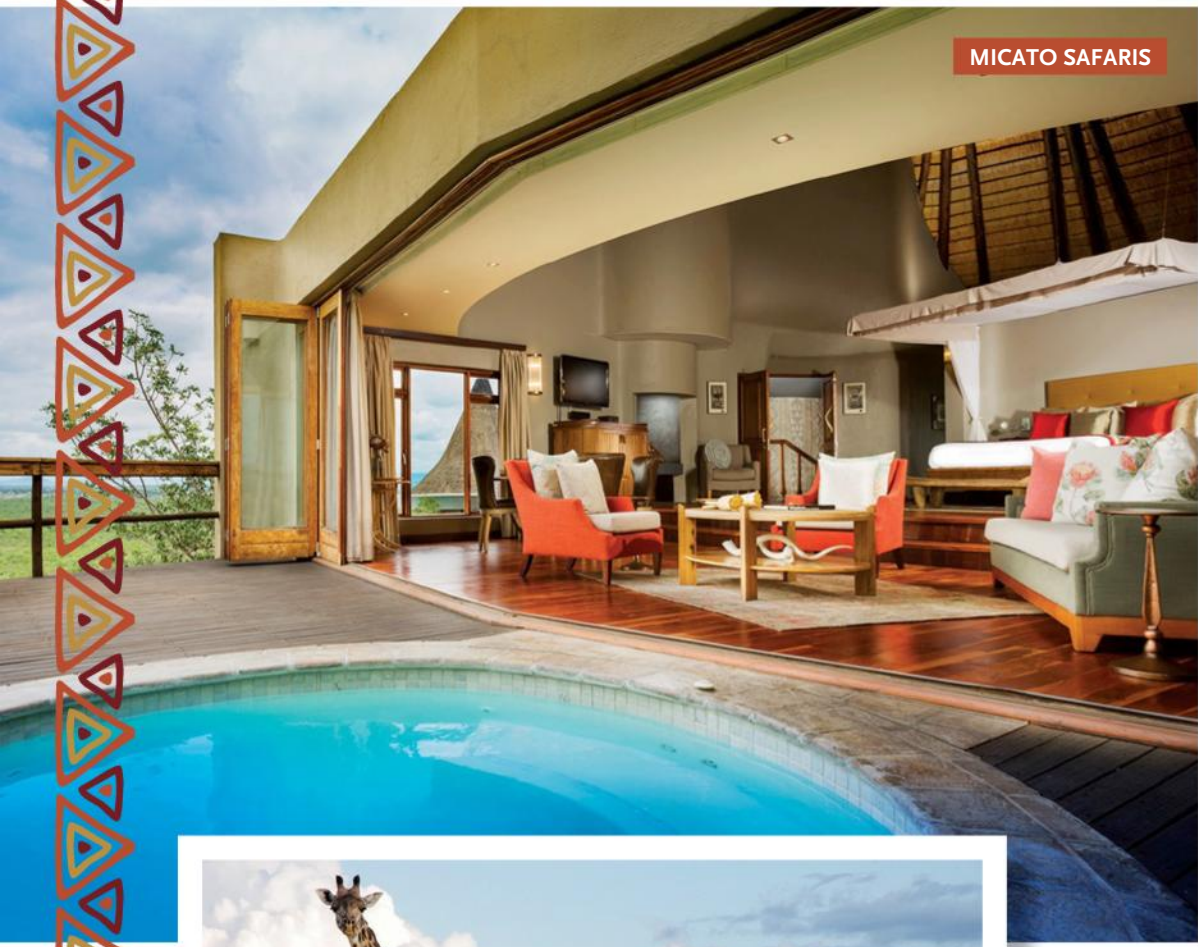
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NEW AGE OF Safaris

A WIDENING WORLD OF WILDLIFE EXPERIENCES AND
LUXURY AMENITIES MEAN SAFARIS ARE MUCH MORE THAN
ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME, BUCKET LIST OPTIONS **BY LARRY OLMSTED**





You can see a **tiger** at the zoo,
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Tigers are rare super predators, not just at the top of their local food chain, but dominant in every way. The Bengal tiger, a solitary hunter, fears nothing and considers nothing off limits. Unlike most cats, they are powerful swimmers and have been known to dive into a lake to kill a full-grown crocodile. Their intense eyes are the stuff of classical literature, and few animals are as majestic. They exude raw power, grace and utter confidence with every step, a regal bearing you can't observe behind the bars of a cage.

To fully appreciate this largest of all great cats, you have to see one in the wild, and for most travelers that means going to India. Suddenly, more people are doing just that, even those who have been on safari before to see lions. And, because a world of must-see wildlife awaits, they are also flocking to Rwanda to see gorillas, the Arctic to see polar bears, and Sri Lanka to see blue whales.

Safari vacations have been soaring in popularity for years, benefiting from the growth of luxury lodging and the concurrent trend of experiential travel. More travelers want to experience something more memorable on vacation than beach time, but many want to do it in the same high style. For the industry, recent saddening press about the poaching of rhinos and tigers, destruction of habitats and the paid killing of trophy animals like Cecil the Lion has had a

silver lining. People are realizing they have a limited opportunity to see some of the world's most magnificent creatures, and as they do, the rising value of wildlife tourism increases the protection these animals receive. For instance, Botswana, where luxury safaris are booming, is busily creating new safe havens for rhinos from countries that cannot adequately protect them, and is putting the full resources of its military on the case to take on poachers.

Following the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, the number of luxury safari lodges in South Africa exploded, and the country supplanted such traditional destinations as Kenya and Tanzania as the hot new place. But today, South Africa no longer enjoys a monopoly on the highest-end travel. Raising the bar for the entire industry caused a hospitality resurgence in east Africa and a new upscale expansion in Zambia, Namibia and especially Botswana, as well as in other parts of the world. Great options are more plentiful than ever, and between the geographic differences and heightened quality, the wildlife safari, formerly a once-in-a-lifetime experience for most Americans, draws people back again and again.

"I went to Tanzania in 1999 to see the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro Crater and to climb Mount Kilimanjaro," says Soumi Eachempati, a nationally renowned surgeon and professor. At that time, his was the most typical safari vacation itinerary, and for many travelers the only one. But Eachempati would join the forefront of the new safari trend, returning repeatedly to see different wildlife in different ways. "I went back in 2012 to South Africa. The next time we were in Uganda and Rwanda, doing the chimpanzee and gorilla watching. My favorite trips are some combination of activity and photography. On my list to go next over the next five years are Botswana, Namibia and the Kalahari, where I hope to visit Tswalu." A Relais & Chateaux member,

Tswalu is one of the most luxurious safari lodges in the world, with just five villas and one home on nearly 220,000 acres, but it is first and foremost a cutting-edge conservation and research project undertaken by the Oppenheimer family, associated with the De Beers diamond fortune. It is located in South Africa's Kalahari Desert, once considered remote but now an increasingly desirable destination.

This is a scenario that Anne Scully, the president of McCabe World Travel, who is consistently rated among top travel agents, has seen over and over again in recent years. She describes a billionaire couple who first went on safari by themselves. "They were wowed and went back with their kids, eight in total. Then they went back with their kids and grandkids and nannies, 25 of them. It gets in the heart." Mark Lakin of the luxury exotic travel agency Epic Road concurs. "I'd say 90 percent of my clients come in saying 'I'm only going to do this once. It's a Bucket List thing, so I've got to do it right.' But when they finish they say, 'That was the best trip of my life, where can I go on safari next?'"

Safaris are also one of the last truly cigar-friendly vacations. You can enjoy a smoke on a private deck overlooking a real-life nature documentary. Most luxury camps also have open-air bars and viewing platforms where your cigar is welcome. You can puff while you sip during the afternoon game drive, as it's traditional to stop in the open bush for "sundowners," or sunset cocktails.

The safari vacation once meant a trip to Africa to see lions, leopards, cheetahs, elephants, giraffes, rhinos, zebra and hippos. But the current trend has travelers seeking other dramatic wildlife experiences worldwide, such as tigers, polar bears, grizzlies and

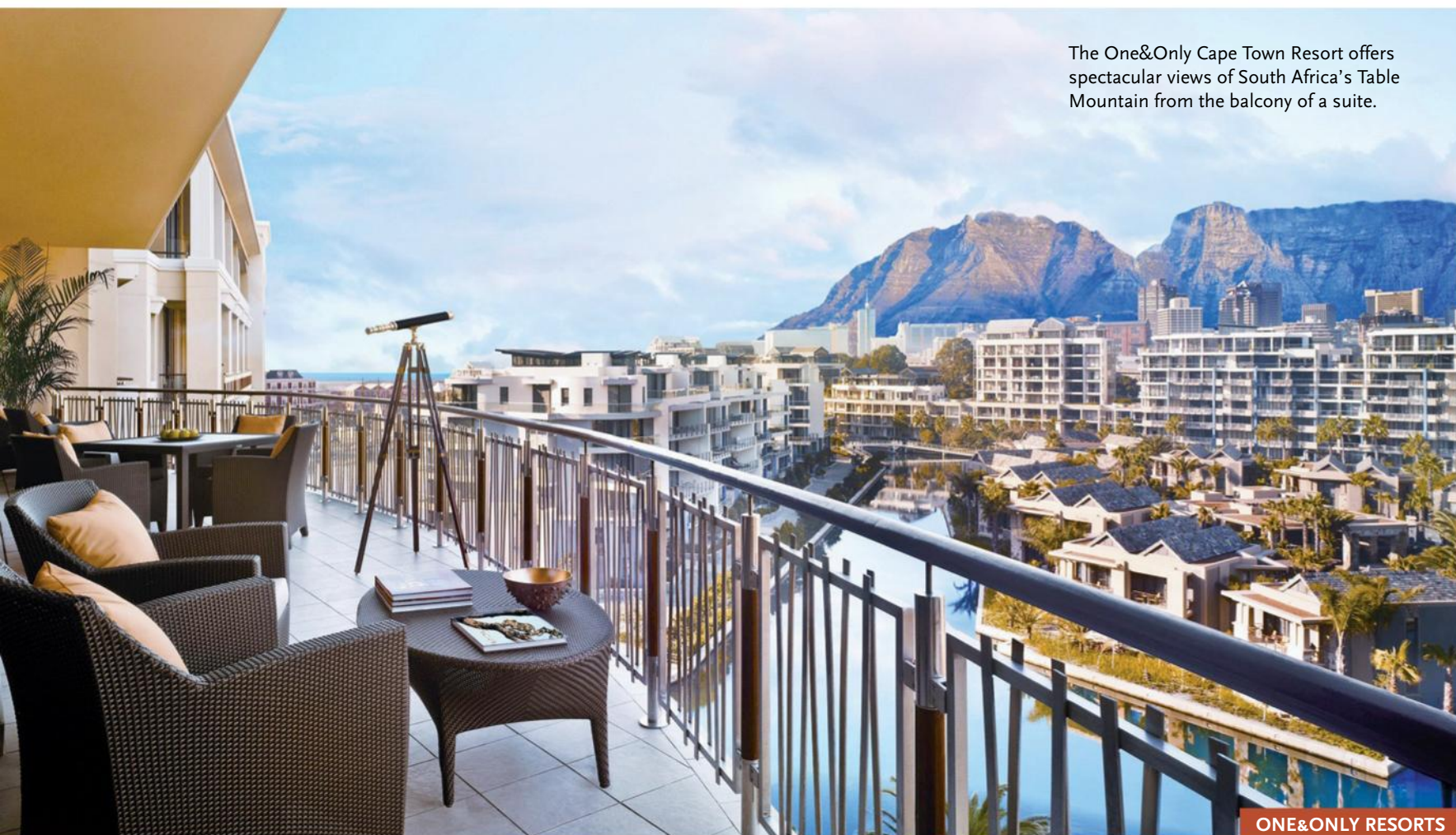
whales. Geoffrey Kent, perhaps the world's most famous safari guide and founder of the adventure-travel giant Abercrombie & Kent, recently wrote a blog entitled "Safaris Mean More Than Just Africa." For Kent, who was born in Zambia, grew up in Kenya and made his fortune bringing travelers to that continent, this is a big declaration. The prime locations for alternative safaris include the Galapagos Islands, Antarctica, Costa Rica and India.

After you've seen the classic parks, consider these alternative destinations and next-adventure animal sightings:

Botswana

Botswana has quickly emerged as a hot spot by offering a combination of first-rate governance, luxury infrastructure and vast unspoiled wilderness promoted in a very low-density way. Yet it is still easy to access via short, scheduled flights leaving from the South African gateways of Cape Town or Johannesburg. Large safari hotels are almost completely unknown here. Instead, the model is the tiny, upscale camp, with as few as four rooms and usually less than a dozen, which are built and operated in low-impact ways. "Everyone thinks of East Africa first, but Botswana and Namibia are very high on my list," says Chad Clark, principal of Chad Clark Travel in Phoenix, who has been all over Africa.

Most camps are in the famed Okavango Delta, the world's largest inland delta, where rivers empty into a maze of wetlands that support an amazing diversity of wildlife. Islands, lakes, rivers and peninsulas create a gorgeous mosaic, allowing many lodges to offer unique alternative options alongside standard game drives, such as canoe safaris. Many camps are only reachable by bush planes, and



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most are unfenced, meaning animals can—and do—wander right up to the rooms. It is very possible to view significant wildlife from the deck, bed or even the toilet. The country is home to some of the most luxurious lodges. Botswana's crème de la crème offering is Zarafa, a four-tent camp owned and operated by the Emmy- and Peabody Award-winning photographers and filmmakers Dereck and Beverly Joubert. As *National Geographic* Explorers-in-Residence, the couple shot many acclaimed and popular documentaries, especially keying on lions, right at Zarafa. It sits in the unspoiled 320,000-acre Selinda Reserve, also rich in leopards, birds and elephants. Everything at Zarafa is over the top, from the in-room complimentary bars stocked with 18-year-old Glenfiddich to the highest-end professional camera and lens kits, available as loaners.

Botswana “is very unplugged, the wildest of the wild left today in Southern Africa, and often it is combined with a visit to Victoria Falls, one of the new Seven Wonders of the World,” Alan Petersen says. The top guide in Southern Africa for Micato Safaris has been perennially named the world's best safari operator by travel and industry publications (and our polls) and has guided such VIP clients as billionaire Warren Buffet. His customers have stayed at the finest hotels in the world and want something rawer, to get their boots dirty. “If our guests come back a third time and want something really different, it's Namibia or the Kalahari Desert.”

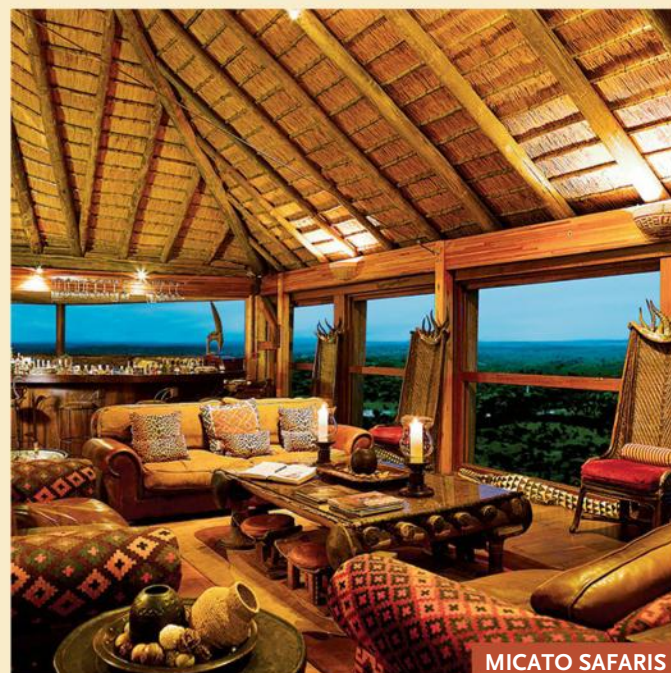
Namibia and Kalahari Desert

The desert ecosystem stands in contrast to Botswana's wetlands, the South African bush or the savanna grasslands of East Africa. It hosts far more wildlife than its barren, hot landscape suggests, and the benefits of its open space and sand are much easier tracking, better nocturnal safaris and the ability to follow animals almost anywhere. “It's very new on the list, and they've won a lot of awards for safety and security,” says Scully. The world's oldest desert is a unique combination of granite moonscape and towering dune.

The Skeleton Coast, full of more than 1,000 eerie shipwrecks sprawled across the sands like the set of some post-apocalyptic sci-fi film, is one of the few opportunities to easily combine the ocean with safari, and a great place to view Cape Fur seals. Inland Namibia is rich in elephants, giraffes, lions and the increasingly hard to see rhino. “The desert is similar to the Kalahari but it runs right to the edge of the ocean, just spectacular,” says Petersen. The top spot in the country is the Sossusvlei Desert Lodge.

Perhaps the best-kept secret in safaris is the Kalahari Desert, which covers parts of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. A unique ecosystem, it is home to the black-maned Kalahari lion, the largest on earth, and the critically endangered black desert rhino, which can be tracked here on foot. The region is famous for its families of meerkat, and there are antelope endemic to only this spot. It is among the best places on earth to spot a number of rare or elusive species, including aardvark, pangolin, Hartmann's mountain zebra, African wild cats, bat-eared foxes and packs of African wild dogs, among the most coveted of all safari sightings. Cheetahs are plentiful, and the absence of cover makes this a spectacular place to see the world's fastest land animal in motion.

By far the best choice is Tswalu, which adds several elements to the Kalahari's already impressive list. It includes a full spa,



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Abercrombie & Kent: abercrombiekent.com, Nine-day Uganda safari with gorilla tracking from \$7,500 per person; 10-day Galapagos luxury adventure cruise from \$8,500 per person. Also does bespoke.

&Beyond Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, Namibia: andbeyond.com/sossusvlei-desert-lodge, \$360-\$580 per person per night.

Epic Road: epicroad.com, mostly custom but three-night gorilla safaris with two days viewing start at \$3,500 per person; four-night Canadian polar bear safaris from \$7,900 per person.

Lindblad Expeditions/National Geographic: expeditions.com, 11-day Arctic polar bear and walrus cruise, from \$9,830 per person.



Micato Safaris: micato.com, mostly bespoke, but, for scheduled departures, 12-day Botswana luxury trip with Victoria Falls \$11,450-\$14,850 per person, truly all-inclusive with all internal charter flights, transfers and gratuities; 15-day India trip with Ranthambore tiger safari, Agra, Delhi, Jaipur, Varanasi and Mumbai, from \$16,000 per person, truly all-inclusive.

Tswalu, Kalahari Desert, South Africa: tswalu.com, \$850 per person, per night, all inclusive.

Zarafa Camp, Botswana: greatplainsconservation.com/zarafa-camp, \$1,700-\$2,600 per person per night, luxury all inclusive. —LO



TSWALU



ZARAFA

Tswalu, with its five private villas in the Kalahari Desert, provides the area's most luxurious accommodations. Completely customizable itineraries allow visitors to view a wildlife panorama at their leisure. The 320,000-acre Zarafa Camp, in Botswana, pairs luxury tent accommodations with face-to-face wildlife experiences, some right from your abode.

private ranger and vehicle for each of the five villas, stargazing, and itineraries are totally customizable with no set times. You can stay out all day or all night, have meals in the bush, or add in walking or horseback safaris along with what are likely the best night safaris anywhere. The lodge operates scheduled service daily from Cape Town and Johannesburg on its own private jet.

Victoria Falls

One of the new Seven Wonders of the World, Victoria Falls is, by some measures, the largest of its kind on earth. Known in the native tongue as "The Smoke that Thunders," the falls span the Zambia/Zimbabwe border, and while the viewing is considered better on the Zimbabwe side, the lodging and tourism infrastructure (and government) is superior in Livingstone, Zambia. Most luxury guests

ensconce themselves at the posh Royal Livingstone resort, where zebra and giraffe openly graze around the resort grounds, and you can walk right from your room to the trails overlooking the falls.

While a visit to Victoria Falls is often done as add-on to a safari, few realize the wealth of experiences available here. Livingstone offers an enormous amount of natural, adventure and cultural excursions, including helicopter sightseeing, river cruises, mountain bike or ATV trips, kayak and canoe trips, game fishing for prized tiger fish, easy visits to nearby wildlife parks on both sides, craft markets, cultural performances, and luxury train and dinner excursions. Zambia is one of the best places for an elephant-back safari outing. A must is the half-day trip to Livingstone Island, in the center of the falls where the daring can take a swim in the Devil's Pool at the very precipice of Victoria Falls. There are also full-day excursions to safaris in nearby National Parks. It is possible to base yourself in Livingstone for a week and fill your time with nonstop activities, including safari game drives, especially when traveling with children. This destination warrants more time than many travelers allow, but from a wildlife perspective, it is still better to add the Falls onto a conventional lodge-based Southern Africa safari.

Primates

After seeing the Big Five, the question is what's next? "For almost all my clients, the next thing today is gorillas," says Scully. "I think meeting the gorillas is the top of the Bucket List for all of Africa." Primates are the big draw in Rwanda and Uganda (Rwanda is easier and more popular) and fewer than a thousand mountain gorillas remain in their natural habitat. The parks are strictly managed. Permits are required, and rules typically limit each visitor to a one-hour interaction. (Because of the limits, some visit both countries on one gorilla-intensive trip.) As a result, gorilla treks are usually added on to other safaris.

Physical exertion is required, as the gorillas must be reached on foot by hiking at altitude.

Half of the world's mountain gorillas can be found on the volcanic slopes of one Rwandan destination, the beautiful and misty Parc National des Volcans. The country is widely considered safe and welcoming, and parks are well managed with expert guides. The top lodging is the Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge, and the Virunga Lodge is also popular.

Tigers

After the classic assortment of African wildlife, the next must-see on the animal lover's list has to be the tiger, the biggest of all big cats, even more magnificent than the leopard. Tigers are more difficult to see in the wild, and India, which is home to about



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The New BIG Five

As the safari sphere has grown to include more of the globe, so too have the kinds of creatures tourists want to view up close. After the traditional Big Five of lion, elephant, cape buffalo, leopard and rhino, look for these animals, our nominations for the new Big Five.

Tiger The world's largest cat body-slams its prey and then snaps its neck. Nevertheless, the elusive Asian predator is endangered by man.

Polar Bear Equally at home on land and sea, the polar bear has a singular diet. Its liver is adapted to digest seals: the preferred meal.

Blue Whale Talk about big: the blue whale's huge tongue alone outweighs an elephant. Surprisingly, it gets that large by eating tiny krill.

Silverback Gorilla With remote habitats, Silverbacks were unknown before the 20th century. They utilize complex vocalizations.

Grizzly Bear Our one American entrant is well-named. The grizzly can weigh as much as 1,400 pounds and often sports four-inch claws.

80 percent of the 2,500 or remaining Bengal tigers, is by far the best destination at which to find them. The Bandhavgarh National Park has one of the highest densities of Bengal tigers in the world and good flight connections from both Delhi and Mumbai, though it is a few-hours drive from the airport. Even better is Ranthambore National Park. Considered the single best place on earth for a tiger safari, it is convenient to the city of Jaipur, already on most tourist itineraries. Created in the 19th century as a private hunting reserve for the Maharajah of Jaipur, it is unique as a national park for its atmospheric structures, crumbling temples, arched gates and raised stone foundations with columns. This is a lost-city atmosphere in which the regal tigers pose. It is estimated that roughly 90 percent of all commercial images of tigers, from books to postcards, have been shot here.

"Seeing a tiger is always more moving than people expect," says Abhishek Sharma, general manager of the Oberoi Rajvillas resort in Jaipur, the gateway to Ranthambore. Sharma meets many first-time travelers returning from the park. "They come to India for the Taj Mahal...They say reading and pictures prepared them for the Taj, but nothing could prepare them for the tigers."

These two parks also have a surprising wealth of other notable wildlife, most strikingly leopards, along with sloth bear, wild boar, porcupine, jackal, jungle cat, monkeys, antelope, crocodile and peacocks, as well as more than 300 species of birds. This is important because while you will almost always see lions on an African safari, tiger viewing is iffy, and it is possible to come away empty handed. For that reason, experts suggest booking at least three to six of the twice-daily game drives. Like gorilla trekking, tiger safaris are usually an add-on to trips made to India for other reasons. The main tourist triumvirate, which is called the Golden Triangle, is Delhi, Agra (home of the Taj Mahal) and Jaipur. It is advisable to spend at least two to three full days at Ranthambore, which is home to three luxury camps: the over-the-top Oberoi Vanyavilas, the boutique-like Aman-i-Khas and the Sawai Madhopur Lodge.

Indian National Parks have strict yet convoluted rules and require guides. Navigating this bureaucracy and India's frenetic travel infrastructure is very cumbersome. The service of an expert outfitter is essential. The best is Micato Safaris, which is exclusive to India and Africa. Abercrombie & Kent also has a strong Indian presence. While both are excellent for Africa, they have several quality competitors. In India, however, they stand nearly alone.

Polar Bears & Grizzlies

"Ten years ago no one cared about seeing polar bears, but suddenly it's the next big thing," says Scully. "If you go to Churchill you are going to see bears." The Manitoba, Canada, location's nickname is "Polar Bear Capital of the World." Other top spots are Greenland and Norway's Svalbard peninsula, where adventure cruises typically mix small ships with kayaks and inflatable zodiacs for close-up experiences.

Grizzly bears are the top trip-worthy American animal. While Alaska has long been a popular place to see them, Yellowstone National Park, with its wolves, bison, moose and wild horses, has pulled ahead. The region has also benefited from the addition of numerous luxury hotels. "We take Yellowstone for granted," says Jermanok. The Park has its own lodges that offer local color and easy access, especially at Old Faithful, where guests can view the geyser's eruption from their rooms. More luxurious options include the Four Seasons in Jackson, Wyoming.

What's Next?

While the animals are less dramatic, they are still the primary reason to visit the Galapagos Islands, home to giant tortoises, lizards, penguins, birds and more. Australia is emerging, especially with the recent luxury development of Kangaroo Island. "The Southern Ocean Lodge there is fantastic," says Scully. "At sunset you sip Champagne as the kangaroos come out." Interest is growing in South America, especially to see panthers, sloths and the Cloud Forest of Ecuador. Lakin predicts Sri Lanka will be the next big destination. "They have a true classic safari product," he says, "with one of the planet's densest populations of leopards." It's also one of the only places in the world to reliably visit blue whales. ❖

Larry Olmsted is a CIGAR AFICIONADO contributing editor.

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116

CIGAR REVIEW: 79 SMOKES

Our panel of editors assess the quality of 79 premium cigars, all purchased at retail and smoked blind.

132

CONNOISSEUR'S CORNER

Cigars can age like wine—sometimes even better if the atmospheric conditions are stable. We found a near-perfect pre-Castro that scored 99 points, plus a 20-year-old Punch that still has plenty of pep.

135

PARALLEL BRANDS

How is it that there are Cuban and non-Cuban cigars of the same name? Senior editor Greg Mottola traces the history of the classic Cuban brands and how they came to have U.S.-friendly counterparts.

143

DEATH OF A CIGAR MASTER

Legendary cigarmaker José Orlando Padrón, founder of Padrón Cigars Inc., died in Miami at 91 years old. His cigars were some of the finest in the world and his contributions to the premium cigar industry were invaluable.

151

THE BIG SMOKE LAS VEGAS

CIGAR AFICIONADO's main event returned to Las Vegas for a weekend of superb smokes, fine drinks and camaraderie.

JEFF HARRIS

churchills

Oliva Serie O cigars are sometimes overshadowed by Oliva's more full-bodied brands such as Serie V and Serie V Melanio, but the Serie O represents an interesting concept in the Oliva portfolio. The Churchill scored an outstanding 92 points. Unlike many cigars, which often incorporate different tobacco varietals within the same blend, the Serie O consists of tobacco all grown from the same seed type, yet from different regions of Nicaragua: Estelí, Condega and Jalapa. The same seed often produces very different tobacco when planted in different areas. This type of blending is more of a traditional Cuban method, one that emphasizes the diversity of terroir over seed type. ■ Cigarmaker A.J. Fernandez is as creative as he is industrious. We're reminded of this by the San Lotano Requiem Habano Churchill, which scored 91 points. The cigar combines a Cuban-seed wrapper grown in Brazil with Nicaraguan tobacco that Fernandez grows on his farms. There's a touch of Honduran leaf in the blend as well, all amounting to a luscious, substantial smoke that starts out medium bodied and ends up quite full by the final puffs.



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

OLIVA SERIE O CHURCHILL

A solidly rolled Churchill that produces a sweet and spicy smoke layered with touches of chocolate, ground red pepper and a hint of caramel. A complex and balanced smoke.

U.S.: \$7.65 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: BRAZIL

SAN LOTANO REQUIEM HABANO CHURCHILL

As this large cigar burns it forms a very solid white ash. The easy draw shows floral and woody elements with touches of vanilla and toasted caramel. The finish hints of peanuts.

U.S.: \$8.60 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ALEC BRADLEY CONNECTICUT CHURCHILL

An attractive-looking cigar with a three-seam cap. Its smoke shows nutty and spicy impressions alongside touches of citrus and sweet wood. The long finish hints of caramel.

U.S.: \$7.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

90



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

CAO PILÓN CHURCHILL

This toothy Churchill burns evenly, its draw, full and open. Sweet nougat and earth notes meld pleasantly with woody intonations and hints of vanilla. The finish is oaky.

U.S.: \$7.69 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: MEXICO

THE WISE MAN MADURO CHURCHILL

Dark and box-pressed, this cigar is rich in coffee, earth and nutty qualities that are balanced by sweet touches of butterscotch on the finish.

U.S.: \$11.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

LA AURORA 1962 COROJO CHURCHILL

Constructed with a well-made cap and a flat head, this big cigar delivers lots of creamy smoke with underpinnings of earth, cinnamon and some fruit. There's a faint hint of nougat on the finish.

U.S.: \$6.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: HONDURAS, DOM. REP.
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

CAMACHO CRIOLLO CHURCHILL

This oily cigar has an easy, open draw that delivers lots of thick smoke. Notes of oaky vanilla and herbs layer the palate before a predominantly floral finish.

U.S.: \$8.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

88**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

FONSECA VINTAGE CHURCHILL

An easygoing Churchill that offers lots of dry, cedary smoke punctuated by a wheaty, graham cracker sweetness. The draw is open, the burn line quite even.

U.S.: \$8.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

88**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

PDR 1878 CAPA NATURAL CHURCHILL

A big cigar rolled with a yellowish cover leaf and topped with a pigtail cap. Its easy draw offers light, creamy smoke with touches of cherry wood. The finish is salty.

U.S.: \$7.32 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild

88**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ROMEO Y JULIETA RESERVE CHURCHILL

The aroma of this tan Churchill suggests molasses cookies as warm notes of sweet cedar and cappuccino emerge on the palate. The finish is a bit dry.

U.S.: \$7.14 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

88**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

PERDOMO RESERVE CHAMPAGNE NOIR CHURCHILL

Near black in appearance, this large and imposing cigar has a tight draw that shows meaty, woody notes with touches of licorice. The finish is charry.

U.S.: \$8.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

87**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

SAN CRISTOBAL ELEGANCIA CHURCHILL

There's a lush draw to this big cigar that shows salty, toasty notes along with a bit of licorice. The finish is rather sharp.

U.S.: \$7.65 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

86**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA ALIANZA ROSADO CHURCHILL EXTRA

Draped in a shiny, colorado wrapper, this cigar burns evenly, producing lots of earthy herbal smoke with hints of brown sugar and char. Some bitter notes on the finish hurt the final score.

U.S.: \$7.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

85

corona gordas

One of the thickest Cuban Hoyo de Monterreys is also one of the highest scoring cigars of this category. The Le Hoyo de San Juan scored 92 points for its ability to deliver layer after layer of big flavors. It's the newest (and fattest) addition to the Serie Le Hoyo, which is a sub-brand of the core line. Hoyo de Monterrey as a brand has always appealed to both the beginner for its traditionally light body and the connoisseur for its nuanced complexity. While we certainly found the Le Hoyo de San Juan to be complex, it wasn't exactly a light-bodied or mild cigar. The notes of wood, pistachio and espresso were clear and distinct. All the samples smoked here were packaged in aluminum tubos and sold in packs of three, rather than 25-count, slide-lid cabinets. ■ Cuba's Montecristo Double Edmundo is the newest of Montecristo's Edmundo sizes, and it also scored 92 points. Classified as a *doble* in Cuban cigar factories, the size first came to market in 2013 and, like the Hoyo de Monterrey Le Hoyo de San Juan, is evidence that Habanos S.A., Cuba's worldwide distributor, is intent on creating heavier ring gauges.



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5 7/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: JUNE 2015

HOYO DE MONTERREY LE HOYO DE SAN JUAN (TUBO)

Enrobed in an attractive cover leaf, this thick cigar burns evenly, delivering big impressions of rich wood, pistachio nut and espresso crema. There is a pleasing hint of white wine on the finish.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £27.43 STRENGTH: Medium

92



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 6 1/4"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: SEPTEMBER 2016

MONTECRISTO DOUBLE EDMUNDO

Rich coffee notes meld harmoniously with wood and coconut impressions as this reddish-brown cigar burns. The draw is quite full, the finish long and pleasing.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £24.86 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 55 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

MONTE BY MONTECRISTO AJ FERNANDEZ TORO

Crafted with a pristine, chocolate-brown wrapper, this cigar burns and draws evenly, delivering notes of coffee, fruit and toast with touches of dark chocolate.

U.S.: \$11.44 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

NEW WORLD PURO ESPECIAL SHORT CHURCHILL

A dark, oily cigar with a lush draw and even burn. Its smoke is rich and earthy, showing notes of baking spices and leather. The finish suggests chocolate and cream.

U.S.: \$8.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 5/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: JUNE 2016

PUNCH PUNCH

Expertly rolled and topped with a three-seam cap, the smoke from this cigar is floral and woody, buttressed by pleasing notes of almond and butterscotch.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £17.97 STRENGTH: Medium

91



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: DECEMBER 2016

RAMON ALLONES TERRA MAGICA EXCLUSIVO ADRIATICO
An oaky, nutty cigar balanced by notes of cedar, spice and a long, resonant finish of blackstrap molasses. Well constructed with a three-seam cap.
U.S.: N/A EUROPE: 19.50 EURO STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

PLASENCIA ALMA DEL CAMPO TRAVESIA
This oily looking cigar has a good draw. Woody notes of cedar play off the cigar's inherent salt-and-pepper qualities. The bready finish hints of sweetness and spice.
U.S.: \$17.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

90



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

CORNELIUS & ANTHONY MERIDIAN TORO
A well-made cigar with an oily, cocoa-hued wrapper. Its lush shows nutty, woody notes with hints of nutmeg and minerals. The finish is a bit dry.
U.S.: \$9.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89



COSTA RICA
RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP., PERU, ECUADOR, PARAGUAY
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: BRAZIL

GAAJA MADURO TORO
The lush, open draw of this dark, box-pressed cigar imparts a primarily earthy smoke with underpinnings of walnut shell, anise and licorice.
U.S.: \$15.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

GURKHA CELLAR RESERVE 15 YEAR 10TH ANNIVERSARY TORO
An attractive cigar crafted with an even cap and head. Notes of earth and minerals are interspersed with hints of tea, baking spice and a touch of graham cracker.
U.S.: \$14.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89



U.S.A.
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA PALINA GOLDIE TORO
Crafted with a fantail cap, this well-made cigar offers lots of earthy, oaky smoke that takes on the spicy qualities of pickled ginger. Hints of cedar and cinnamon also emerge as it burns.
U.S.: \$22.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

CASA FERNANDEZ AGANORSA LEAF TABSA DHARMA NO. 3
There's an alluring sheen to this cigar's dark and oily cover leaf. As it smokes, dry graham cracker notes meld with touches of spice and charry woods. Its burn is clean, the draw a little tight.
U.S.: \$7.20 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

88



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: COLOMBIA, NICARAGUA, DOM. REP., U.S.A./PENN. BROADLEAF
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

PULITA 60 ANIVERSARIO TORO
Oils are seeping through the streaky wrapper of this rustic-looking cigar. It burns unevenly, showing an herbal, strong smoke with a musty, damp earthiness.
U.S.: \$13.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

85

figurados

More than half the cigars in this category scored 90 points or higher, outstanding on our 100-point scale. The top three scored 92 points, and represent three different countries and styles. Made in Cuba for the Asia Pacific region, the Rafael Gonzalez 88 is a delightful double figurado with tapers on both ends and a comfortable ring gauge. As a brand, Rafael Gonzalez is tiny, kept alive by the Regional Edition program. The Undercrown Sun Grown Flying Pig is made in Nicaragua by Drew Estate and rolled in a quirky fat perfecto size. Villiger's La Flor de Ynclan has experienced a fantastic rebirth. Discontinued in 2008, it was reblended, redesigned and rereleased last year.



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 5 1/4"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: DECEMBER 2016

RAFAEL GONZALEZ

88 EXCLUSIVO ASIA PACÍFICO

This tapered perfecto burns evenly, showcasing floral characteristics with touches of walnuts, brown sugar and oaky white wine. Elegant and refined.

U.S.: N/A HONG KONG: HK\$268.00 STRENGTH: Medium

92



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 3 15/16"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. HABANO
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

UNDERCROWN SUN GROWN FLYING PIG

A bomb-shaped perfecto with a tight pigtail cap. It smokes well, offering bright, zippy notes of pepper and sour cherry around a spicy, leathery core.

U.S.: \$12.73 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: INDONESIA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

VILLIGER LA FLOR DE YNCLAN TORPEDO

Draped in a toothy cover leaf, this figurado's lush draw shows complex notes of walnut and leather interwoven with fruity impressions of raisin, date and dried apricot.

U.S.: \$12.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



HONDURAS
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
BINDER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

ALEC BRADLEY PRENSADO LOST ART TORPEDO

Big notes of hickory wood and crushed coffee bean are beautifully accented by touches of cinnamon, tea and a hint of amaro.

U.S.: \$12.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: FEBRUARY 2017

H. UPMANN NO. 2

A core of toasty, leathery characteristics build the body of this large figurado. Peanut notes and a pleasant sweetness also emerge, with a finish that resounds of more leather.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £21.92 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 3/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: APRIL 2016

MONTECRISTO OPEN REGATA (TUBO)

The smoke from this dark and oily belicoso layers the palate with savory intonations of roasted meats that are elevated by toasty notes of roasted almonds. A bold, meaty cigar.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £17.50 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

PADRÓN SERIE 1926 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Every puff of this box-pressed figurado envelops the palate with a creamy, toasty smoke layered with hints of salted peanut, cedar and licorice. Nuanced and tasty.

U.S.: \$26.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 49 LENGTH: 4 5/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

FUENTE FUENTE OPUSX BELICOSO XXX

The powerful smoke from this small, reddish-brown figurado packs quite a punch. It showcases notes of red pepper, cinnamon and spicy ginger with a touch of red wine on the finish.

U.S.: \$10.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

90

**MEXICO**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, MEXICO
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: MEXICO

CASA TURRENT SERIE 1942 TORPEDO

This box-pressed torpedo is draped in a very dark wrapper. Its smoke is predominantly earthy, with hints of almonds and licorice. The finish is quite toasty.

U.S.: \$9.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

DAVIDOFF NICARAGUA DIADEMA

A big figurado with a perfect draw and burn. Notes of cinnamon and wood are buttressed by hints of pecan nut and fruit. There is a touch of honey on the finish.

U.S.: \$20.20 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA GLORIA CUBANA COLECCIÓN RESERVA TORPEDO

The easy draw of this figurado offers notes of cedar and pistachio coupled with bolder intonations of earth and leather that lead to a mineral finish.

U.S.: \$8.29 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89

**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/4"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: JULY 2017

COHIBA PIRÁMIDES EXTRA (TUBO)

First puffs of this figurado are predominantly floral, but it opens to show a toasty quality with notes of graham cracker and cinnamon, though the heavy perfume finish hurt the final score.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £44.53 STRENGTH: Medium

88

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

E.P. CARRILLO CAPA DE SOL PIRÁMIDES NO. 5

A good-looking figurado that smokes well, delivering notes of creamy wood, salted pretzel and some floral characteristics, but asour finish hurt the final score.

U.S.: \$9.15 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

87

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

VEGAS CUBANAS IMPERIALES

This veiny torpedo has a nice draw and even burn. Its smoke is floral and tannic with some vague hints of candied orange.

U.S.: \$7.76 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

87

lonsdales

Despite the scarcity of lonsdales, we still have a few companies keeping this slim size alive. Norteño takes a bit of an unorthodox approach to this classic format. Made by Drew Estate in Nicaragua, the Norteño Lonsdale scored 91 points. It's box-pressed but also ovular with rounded edges as opposed to having the sharp corners of a severe trunk-pressing. The smoke itself is rich in cocoa thanks to its three-country blend. Owned by Tampa-based J.C. Newman Cigar Co., Cuesta-Reys are made in the Dominican Republic at the Fuente factory. The Sumatra-seed wrapper is grown in Ecuador by Tampa's Oliva family. It scored 90 points, as did the La Flor Dominicana Cameroon Cabinet No. 1., which brims with all the nutty, spicy qualities often associated with excellent Cameroon tobacco.



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: MEXICO

NORTEÑO LONSDALE

Flattened and ovular, this box-pressed cigar smokes well, showcasing a subtle range of herbs and brown sugar built around a core of cocoa and sweet woods. The finish is chocolatey.

U.S.: \$11.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 6 1/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

CUESTA-REY CENTRO FINO SUNGROWN CAPTIVA

The burn of this attractive lonsdale is clean and even. Rich notes of earth and wood are elevated by elements of chocolate and spice. A balanced cigar.

U.S.: \$7.30 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

LA FLOR DOMINICANA CAMEROON CABINET NO. 1

This toothy, bumpy cigar has an excellent draw and burn. It delivers a dense, toasty smoke redolent of nutmeg and cinnamon before a slightly spicy finish.

U.S.: \$9.70 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ASHTON VIRGIN SUN GROWN ILLUSION

A near-black cigar that draws well and produces a strong, white ash as it burns. Its smoke shows elements of cedar and sweet brown sugar, with an undertone of pleasant charriness.

U.S.: \$11.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

89



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP., MEXICO
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

MACANUDO MADURO BARON DE ROTHSCHILD

The dark, toothy wrapper of this thin cigar is bumpy to the touch. Its dense smoke delivers impressions of sweet woods and dried fruit along with a bit of pepper. The finish is pleasantly herbal.

U.S.: \$7.69 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89

**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 43 LENGTH: 6 3/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: FEBRUARY 2017

ROMEO Y JULIETA CAZADORES

Though the draw of this oily, well-crafted lonsdale is quite firm, pleasing floral and woody notes emerge, braced by a backbone of graham cracker sweetness.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £17.13 STRENGTH: Medium

89**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

THE KING IS DEAD DIAMOND GIRL

A dark and shiny lonsdale constructed with a pigtail cap. Notes of vanilla and wood intertwine with touches of licorice, before a finish that hints of anise.

U.S.: \$10.60 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

ARTURO FUENTE SPANISH LONSDALE

There's a rich earthiness to the smoke of this thin cigar that's interspersed with hints of malted chocolate and lemon citrus. The finish is sweet and a bit chalky.

U.S.: \$5.20 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

88**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. HABANO
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

CAO FLATHEAD V642 PISTON

First puffs of this thin, box-pressed cigar are charry, but its smoke develops woody, earthy characteristics with some touches of licorice. The finish is a bit chalky.

U.S.: \$7.39 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

88**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 5/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

MONTECRISTO CLASSIC ESPECIAL NO. 1

The smoke from this thin cigar layers the palate with herbs, minerals and malted chocolate. Its draw is pleasantly firm, the burn line a bit wavy.

U.S.: \$11.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

88**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 1/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

OLIVA CONNECTICUT RESERVE LONSDALE

This blond lonsdale has a great draw and burn that offers lots of creamy smoke with touches of balsa wood and nutmeg. A very light, easygoing cigar.

U.S.: \$6.59 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild

88**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 44 LENGTH: 6 5/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ROMEO Y JULIETA RESERVA REAL LONSDALE

Though the draw of this lonsdale is a bit firm, it delivers plenty of toasty, woody impressions with hints of anise and herbs. The finish shows lots of minerals.

U.S.: \$7.52 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

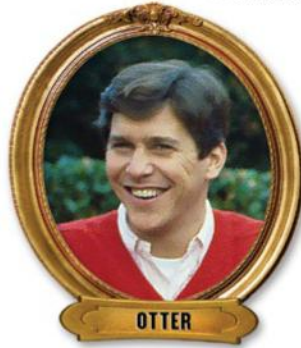
87

THE TOP 25 CIGARS OF 2017

cigar aficionado

THE GOOD LIFE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

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Wrapper leaf has a considerable influence on a cigar's overall character, especially on thinner cigars. It's a simple law of ratios—the thinner the cigar, the more the wrapper comes into play. By this logic, one cannot create a panetela of quality with a mediocre wrapper. In the case of the 7-20-4 Lancero, the Brazilian wrapper was not only gorgeous to behold, but bursting with flavor. The lancero scored 93 points, which is the highest score CIGAR AFICIONADO has ever given to a cigar from the 7-20-4 brand. ■ Made in Nicaragua, the Tatuaje Black Petite Lancero (92 points) was first released in a vertical stand-up box, but is now available a hinged, 8-9-8-style box, albeit in small quantities.



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS,
MEXICO, COLOMBIA
BINDER: COSTA RICA
WRAPPER: BRAZIL

7-20-4 LANCERO

An oily panetela topped with a stubby pigtail cap. Its dense smoke shows big notes of coffee bean, toasted coconut and malted milk ball. There is some dried cherry on the finish. A delicious cigar.

U.S.: \$8.35 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

93



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

TATUAJE BLACK PETITE LANCERO

Enrobed in a dark and alluring wrapper, this thin cigar offers notes of oak wood and red wine before it unfolds to show complex intonations of dark chocolate, nuts and candied orange peel.

U.S.: \$8.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

92



U.S.A.

RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 7 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

DON PEPIN GARCIA ORIGINAL LANCERO

A dark, reddish-brown lancero topped with a three-seam cap and pigtail. The cigar burns evenly, offering notes of hickory wood and crushed cocoa beans joined by floral undertones.

U.S.: \$9.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 7 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ILLUSIONE FUME D'AMOUR JUNIPEROS

Topped with a three-seam cap, this well-rolled panetela showcases leathery notes with savory wood that are balanced by the sweet aftertaste of toasted vanilla and nougat.

U.S.: \$10.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 7 1/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA GALERA HABANO PERILLAS

This well-made cigar is constructed with a coiled pigtail cap. Its lush draw delivers leathery, nutty impressions interwoven with hickory wood and black pepper spice.

U.S.: \$7.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 7 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: FEBRUARY 2016

COHIBA LANCERO

A beautiful panetela adorned with a pigtail cap. Though the draw is quite firm, the cigar burns evenly, offering floral and woody notes with touches of almonds and vanilla. The finish is sweet.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £29.32 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 7 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

ROCKY PATEL SUN GROWN MADURO LANCERO
Rolled with a dark and alluring wrapper, this skinny panetela is topped with a stubby pigtail cap. The cigar burns evenly, delivering earthy and toasty notes alongside hints of fruit and vanilla.
U.S.: \$9.20 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

89



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 7 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: BRAZIL

LARANJA RESERVA LANCERO
The draw of this skinny lancero is quite good, delivering lots of floral, nutty impressions supported by touches of orange peel. The finish is slightly acidic.
U.S.: \$10.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

88



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 36 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

ASHTON PANETELA
Rustic in appearance, this yellowish panetela has an open draw that produces lots of dense, creamy smoke. Nutty and citrusy impressions are interspersed with touches of chalk and burnt crema.
U.S.: \$8.35 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

87



HONDURAS
RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 7 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

GRAN HABANO CONNECTICUT NO. 1 LANCERO
The claro wrapper of this long, thin cigar is quite veiny and the pigtail cap well-constructed. Notes of dry wood and lemon citrus intertwine with a butterscotch sweetness, which recurs on the finish.
U.S.: \$7.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

87



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 7 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

KRISTOFF COROJO LIMITADA LANCERO
Constructed with a big knotted pigtail cap atop its head, this long cigar starts herbal and metallic but develops characteristics of nutmeg and cinnamon as it burns. The finish is a bit dry.
U.S.: \$9.10 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

87



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

DAVIDOFF SIGNATURE NO. 2
Draped in a creamy claro wrapper and topped with a pigtail cap, this thin cigar delivers notes of cedar and salt coupled with hints of citrus. The finish is a bit musty.
U.S.: \$18.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

86



HONDURAS
RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: HONDURAS
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

ALADINO ELEGANTE
A long and skinny cigar rolled with a stitchy wrapper. The draw and burn are fine, but the somewhat nutty smoke is dominated by a saccharine sweetness.
U.S.: \$7.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

85



HONDURAS
RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 7 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

ROCKY PATEL TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY LANCERO
There's a bit of a firm draw to this dark and oily panetela. Its dry smoke shows hints of cocoa powder, marshmallow and wood, but the finish is chalky and could use more depth.
U.S.: \$10.35 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

85



RATED
93

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TOP 25
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2016
#11
CIGAR AFICIONADO

RATED
92

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robustos

Once a formidable brand with many sizes, El Rey del Mundo isn't much more than an afterthought for Cuban monopoly Habanos S.A. The Choix Supreme is one of the few sizes remaining, and the recent runs have been excellent. Sampled from a box packed in May 2017, the Choix Supreme scored 92 points. Elementally, it's a sweet and earthy cigar, but there is structure and specificity, rendering complex notes of caramel and coffee. ■ Headley Grange is a concept from Tennessee-based company Crowned Heads realized by cigarmaker Ernesto Perez-Carrillo, and the Hermoso No. 4 scored 91 points. It's made in the Dominican Republic with Ecuadoran Sumatra-seed wrapper and Nicaraguan tobacco. The idea was for the smoke to taste like the heavy drumbeat heard in the beginning of the Led Zeppelin song "When the Levee Breaks." With Perez-Carrillo being both a cigarmaker and a drummer, there couldn't have been a better person for the job. ■ The Padilla 1932 debuted in 2006 as a Miami-made cigar, but its presence in the market has been sporadic. This most recent version is made in Honduras and scored 91 points.



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MAY 2017

EL REY DEL MUNDO CHOIX SUPREME

Nuanced woods and roasted nuts form the backbone of this bold, flavorful cigar. Coffee bean and caramel elements also emerge before a leathery finish. Its burn is even, its draw full and opulent.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £14.86 STRENGTH: Medium

92



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

HEADLEY GRANGE HERMOSO NO. 4

This box-pressed robusto smokes well, showcasing a woody character with touches of brown sugar and toasted marshmallow. The finish is long and hearty, suggesting hazelnut.

U.S.: \$9.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

PADILLA 1932 ROBUSTO

A well-made cigar with a firm draw and even burn. Notes of earth, peanut and salted pretzel are balanced by a sweet combination of maple and toasted marshmallow.

U.S.: \$9.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

HAMMER + SICKLE TRADEMARK SERIES CONNECTICUT ROBUSTO

The big draw of this blond robusto imparts a creamy smoke with an underlying citrus tang, touches of baking spice and a cocoa powder finish.

U.S.: \$8.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild

90



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR, NICARAGUA

JOYA CABINETTA ROBUSTO

Rolled with two wrappers, this cigar starts woody and tangy with hints of vanilla bean but takes on the sweet quality of chocolate-covered raisins. The finish is toasty.

U.S.: \$6.55 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"

FILLER: DOM. REP.

BINDER: DOM. REP.

WRAPPER: MEXICO

AGING ROOM QUATTRO F55M ESPRESSIVO

This chocolate-hued cigar smokes evenly, delivering toasty notes with hints of saffron, cumin and earth. The mineral finish also has a bit of char.

U.S.: \$10.69 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89

**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 4 7/8"

FILLER: CUBA

BINDER: CUBA

WRAPPER: CUBA

BOX DATE: APRIL 2017

BOLIVAR ROYAL CORONA (TUBO)

Reddish-brown in appearance and constructed with a three-seam cap, this robusto burns unevenly, offering spicy notes that are underscored by hints of nuts and sweet marzipan.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £20.26 STRENGTH: Medium

89

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"

FILLER: NICARAGUA

BINDER: NICARAGUA

WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ASYLUM 13 50X5

Draped in a dark and oily wrapper, the smoke from this robusto shows hints of chocolate and dried fruit around a malty stout beer base. The finish is short, but hints of coffee bean.

U.S.: \$6.16 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

88

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 4 1/2"

FILLER: NICARAGUA

BINDER: NICARAGUA

WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

CORTO X46

A box-pressed little robusto with a good draw and burn. Impressions of wood and coconut emerge around a bold core of cocoa and earth.

U.S.: \$8.67 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

88

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5"

FILLER: NICARAGUA

BINDER: NICARAGUA

WRAPPER: ECUADOR

NAT CICCICO ANIVERSARIO 1965 LIGA NO. 4 ROBUSTO

Crafted with a closed foot and a tight pigtail cap, this box-pressed cigar has a firm draw that shows wheaty and toasty notes interspersed with touches of citrus.

U.S.: \$6.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

87

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 4 1/2"

FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.

BINDER: DOM. REP.

WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

NAT SHERMAN 1930 ROTHSCHILD

This short robusto is rolled with a veiny, chocolate-hued wrapper. Its smoke shows leathery, woody characteristics with some faint touches of cedar and nuts.

U.S.: \$9.55 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

87

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5"

FILLER: NICARAGUA

BINDER: ECUADOR

WRAPPER: MEXICO

VIAJE WHITE LABEL PIÑA NOHEA

The smoke of this rather lumpy, rustic-looking cigar is dry and earthy with faint touches of mint julep and minerals. There are some hints of almond on the finish.

U.S.: \$9.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

87

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5"

FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.

BINDER: DOM. REP.

WRAPPER: MEXICO

QUESADA 40TH ANNIVERSARY ROBUSTO

Though this dark and veiny robusto burns evenly, its smoke is harsh and bitter. Dusty earth and chalk notes are faint and cloaked by chariness.

U.S.: \$9.86 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

80

buying guide

TOP SCORES, VALUES AND STRENGTH | BLIND TASTE TEST NO. 142

TOP SCORES

-  **93** 7-20-4 Lancero
Honduras • \$8.35 • Panetela • Full
-  **92** El Rey del Mundo Choix Supreme
Cuba • £14.86 • Robusto • Medium
-  **92** Hoyo de Monterrey Le Hoyo de San Juan (Tubo)
Cuba • £27.43 • Corona Gorda • Medium
-  **92** Montecristo Double Edmundo
Cuba • £24.86 • Corona Gorda • Medium-Full
-  **92** Oliva Serie O Churchill
Nicaragua • \$7.65 • Churchill • Medium-Full
-  **92** Rafael Gonzalez 88 Exclusivo Asia Pacifico
Cuba • HK\$268.00 • Figurado • Medium
-  **92** Tatuaje Black Petite Lancero
Nicaragua • \$8.50 • Panetela • Full
-  **92** Undercrown Sun Grown Flying Pig
Nicaragua • \$12.73 • Figurado • Medium-Full
-  **92** Villiger La Flor de Yncian Torpedo
Dominican Republic • \$12.00 • Figurado • Medium-Full
-  **91** Padrón Serie 1926 40th Anniversary
Nicaragua • \$26.80 • Figurado • Medium-Full

TOP VALUES

-  **90** Joya Cabinetta Robusto
Nicaragua • \$6.55 • Robusto • Medium-Full
-  **89** La Aurora 1962 Corojo Churchill
Dominican Republic • \$6.00 • Churchill • Medium-Full
-  **88** Arturo Fuente Spanish Lonsdale
Dominican Republic • \$5.20 • Lonsdale • Medium
-  **88** Asylum 13 50x5
Nicaragua • \$6.16 • Robusto • Medium-Full
-  **88** Oliva Connecticut Reserve Lonsdale
Nicaragua • \$6.59 • Lonsdale • Mild

MILDER CIGARS

- 90** Hammer + Sickle Trademark Series Connecticut Robusto
Dominican Republic • Robusto • \$8.75 • Mild
- 88** Fonseca Vintage Churchill
Dominican Republic • Churchill • \$8.80 • Mild-Medium
- 88** Oliva Connecticut Reserve Lonsdale
Nicaragua • Lonsdale • \$6.59 • Mild
- 88** PDR 1878 Capa Natural Churchill
Dominican Republic • Churchill • \$7.32 • Mild
- 87** Ashton Panetela
Dominican Republic • Panetela • \$8.35 • Mild-Medium

MEDIUM-BODIED CIGARS

- 92** El Rey del Mundo Choix Supreme
Cuba • Robusto • £14.86 • Medium
- 92** Hoyo de Monterrey Le Hoyo de San Juan (Tubo)
Cuba • Corona Gorda • £27.43 • Medium
- 92** Undercrown Sun Grown Flying Pig
Nicaragua • Figurado • \$12.73 • Medium-Full
- 91** Padilla 1932 Robusto
Honduras • Robusto • \$9.50 • Medium-Full
- 90** Alec Bradley Connecticut Churchill
Honduras • Churchill • \$7.75 • Medium

STRONGER SMOKES

- 93** 7-20-4 Lancero
Honduras • Panetela • \$8.35 • Full
- 92** Montecristo Double Edmundo
Cuba • Corona Gorda • £24.86 • Medium-Full
- 92** Tatuaje Black Petite Lancero
Nicaragua • Panetela • \$8.50 • Full
- 91** Don Pepin Garcia Original Lancero
U.S.A. • Panetela • \$9.00 • Medium-Full
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connoisseur's corner

There are two reasons why pre-Castro Cuban cigars sell for such high prices at auction. They get rarer by the day (the world supply gets smaller every time one is fired up) and in many cases they have aged into phenomenal smokes. Take, for example, this Hoyo de Monterrey Corona from the mid-1950s. It's not very large, a mere 5 1/2 inches long with a slim ring gauge of 42, but the 60-year-old cigar was brimming with flavor, just a touch of earth balanced by a vibrant mixture of sweet baking spices. It scored a near-perfect 99 points. A much larger (and far younger) Hoyo, the Royal Hunt No. 10, was close behind, with a score of 98 points. Note that we also have a rating here for a rare Dominican cigar, the Partagas 150, released in 1995 by General Cigar Co.



HOYO DE MONTERREY CORONA (CIRCA 1955)

This beautiful, elegant cigar isn't very large, but it smokes like near perfection. The flavor is smooth and rewarding, with plenty of nutmeg and earth on the palate, culminating in a spicy finish. This has nearly everything that's great about a cigar.

—Marvin R. Shanken

99



HOYO DE MONTERREY ROYAL HUNT NO. 10 (1990)

The wrapper on this cigar—a version of a Hoyo Double Corona, made for Irish/British retailer J.J. Fox—is marvelous to behold, and the aroma before lighting is alluring. It has a honeyed wood flavor early on, and then, after about an inch, really intensifies with crushed coffee bean, molasses, earth and a wisp of leather. The finish is sweet, with a backbone of minerality. Plenty of life left in this classic smoke. —David Savona

98



ROMEO Y JULIETA CHURCHILL (2011)

This vintage harkens back to the glory days of the iconic Cuban Churchill. The cigar reflects the excellence of prior harvests, and is packed with classic Romeo y Julieta flavors—espresso, leather notes on the palate, and a sweet earthy finish with cocoa overtones. The draw and burn were flawless, and the wrapper was a perfect reddish-brown colorado color. Still young, with a very long life ahead. —Gordon Mott

97



PUNCH CHURCHILL (1997)

Twenty years has rendered this cigar both sweet and savory. There's plenty of leathery character and rock salt notes, joined by an intermittent breadiness that segues into the sweet core of almonds, honey and cherry cordial. The sweetness fades a bit for a mineral finish, and while the draw was slightly firm the burn remained perfect.

—Gregory Mottola

96



ROMEO Y JULIETA DUNHILL SUN-GROWN BREVA (1961)

This dark, roughish smoke has a fine draw and is earthy, but the flavor is a touch dry. There are some sweet baking spices to counteract the earth, but the cigar is a little on the lighter side. These cigars come packed in a wooden cabinet in two separate bundles of 25, both wrapped in foil. —Marvin R. Shanken

95



PARTAGAS 150 SIGNATURE SERIES PARTAGAS A (1995)

Time has certainly mellowed this slim, Dominican-made, Cameroon-wrapped lonsdale into a mild smoke, but there are still plenty of soft, subtle flavors—both floral and nutty—that finesse the palate. At its most intense moments, the cigar offers notes of nutmeg and black pepper. Its draw and burn are exemplary. —Gregory Mottola

93

tatuaje



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WHAT'S IN A Brand Name

Part of the learning curve for newcomers to the cigar world is that even while they've diligently memorized names of classic Cuban cigars, when they see those brands displayed on a store shelf in the United States they are quite different animals made in a different location.

For almost every Cuban Montecristo cigar, there's a counterpart that was made in the Dominican Republic. A doppelganger of sorts. For every Partagás made in Havana, there's a Partagas made on the next island over in Santiago. And for every cigar roller making Romeo y Julieta with Cuban tobacco, there's a roller making Romeos with everything from Indonesian wrappers to Nicaraguan fillers. The Cubans are shipped all over the world, except for the United States, where the non-Cubans are sold. These parallel brands exist because of the 1962 trade embargo outlawing Cuban cigars in the United States and—for the most part—because brand owners who had seen their companies nationalized by the Cuban Revolution felt they should have the right to their trademarks.

*The peculiar stories
of parallel brands,
cigars that share
the same names
but are made in
separate countries*

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF HARRIS

When Fidel Castro nationalized the cigar industry in 1961, the owners of each major cigar brand fled Cuba and started over elsewhere. More than a decade later a landmark legal decision (*Menendez vs. Faber, Coe and Gregg*) granted the original Cuban owners the right to sell non-Cuban versions of the brands they had lost in the U.S. But there were two major stipulations. First, the cigars couldn't use Cuban tobacco anymore, because of the embargo. Second, parallel brands could

only be sold in the United States.

Most of the popular U.S. cigar trademarks today are in the hands of major corporations. They were acquired through a series of negotiations, acquisitions and mergers. If anything, the story of the parallel brands is an interesting study of trademark law and how it applies to countries under a trade embargo—and each parallel brand does indeed have a story. Here are the histories of the major Cuban brands whose trademark names would eventually be reborn as mirror brands in the United States.

MONTECRISTO

That fact that Montecristo is one of the foremost names in cigars—even nonsmokers know the name—dates back to the expertise of Alonso Menendez. A Spaniard with knowledge of tobacco, he made his name when he purchased Cuba's Particulares factory in the 1930s. In 1935, he created Montecristo and an unforgettable logo to go with it: six rapiers forming a triangle and a fleur de lis in the middle (a motif still used today). The next year, Menendez picked up a partner, José Manuel "Pepe" Garcia, and formed Menendez, Garcia y Cia. The high-volume sales of Montecristo cigars allowed the company to acquire the H. Upmann factory (as well as the then-troubled brand). In just 20 years, Montecristo was an internationally recognized label.

Forced to turn it all over to the Castro regime after the Revolution, Menendez and Garcia became interested in creating and selling non-Cuban versions of Montecristo. They started with Montecruz, a spinoff of the Montecristo brand made in the Canary Islands. Their newly formed company was called Compania Insular Tabacalera S.A. (CIT). Montecruz contained no Cuban tobacco, but resembled Montecristos in both price and packaging. In a sense, Menendez and Garcia were copying themselves in almost every way, short of saying "Montecristo" on the box. However in March, 1972 Menendez fought in U.S. courts for the U.S. rights to the Montecristo name, taking on Faber, Coe and Gregg, the biggest importers of Cuban cigars into the United States, in *Menendez vs. Faber, Coe and Gregg Inc.* Menendez won. The case not only granted Menendez and Garcia the trademark rights to sell cigars under the Montecristo name in the United States, it also set a legal precedent for Cuban expatriates who had had their brands confiscated by the Castro regime.

The same year, Consolidated Cigar Corp. (at the time owned by Gulf + Western) decided that it wanted in. The large corporation bought a controlling interest in CIT. To better protect the trademarks, Consolidated and Garcia created a Netherlands Antilles company called Cuban Cigar Brands N.V. By 1975, the trademark was secured, but it would take a few years for the first non-Cuban Montecristos to reach the United States. They were made in the Canary Islands, then in the Dominican Republic.

By 2000, a series of mergers left Consolidated Cigar in the hands of Altadis U.S.A. Today, major resources are spent by Altadis to develop and promote its flagship Montecristo brand in the United States. A dozen versions of the non-Cuban Montecristo now exist. A few versions are made in Nicaragua, but most are produced in the Dominican Republic.

H. UPMANN

The creation and trajectory of H. Upmann is very similar to that of Montecristo, as they were eventually rolled in the same factory and owned by the same company before the Revolution.

H. Upmann was created in 1844 by banker and financier Hermann Upmann. The story goes that Upmann had the cigars made for

preferred clients in what was intended to be a side project rather than a major business. Nevertheless, by the turn of the century, H. Upmann cigars became enormously popular, being made in more than 200 different sizes and selling some 25 million cigars per year—and sales were growing. That is, until 1922.

While America was experiencing its age of prosperity—and consuming a good portion of H. Upmann cigars—Upmann's bank in Cuba went insolvent. The brand and factory ended up under the ownership of the English company J. Frankau & Co. Ltd. before the brand was finally rescued by Menendez, Garcia y Cia., which was seeing tremendous success with its Montecristo brand. It bought H. Upmann and moved production of Montecristo from the original Particulares factory to the expansive H. Upmann factory.

The commercial success of Montecristo allowed Menendez and Garcia to bring H. Upmann back to life and to reestablish it as one of Cuba's preeminent brands before it became property of the Cuban government.

Subsequent to the Cuban nationalization of the cigar industry, Mendendez and Garcia successfully registered the H. Upmann trademark, along with Montecristo, for U.S. distribution. They produced H. Upmanns in the Canary Islands before selling the rights to Consolidated Cigar, which began to sell non-Cuban H. Upmanns in the U.S. in 1975. Consolidated eventually became part of Altadis U.S.A., which now makes H. Upmann cigars in both Honduras and the Dominican Republic.

ROMEO Y JULIETA

Founded in Cuba in 1875 by Inocencio Alvarez and José "Manin" Garcia, the Romeo y Julieta brand would not thrive until it was taken over by Rodriguez, Arguelles y Cia. One of the principals, José Rodriguez Fernandez, was especially driven to expand the brand. Known as Don Pepin, he aggressively promoted internationally. By 1910, the factory was producing more than 20 million cigars annually, most of which were going to the United States and England.

Don Pepin never saw Castro's Revolution or the nationalization of his brands. His son, on the other hand, experienced the full brunt of Castro's takeover. Stripped of his brand and company, Rodriguez fled to the U.S. where he met Wally Frank, owner of cigar distributor Hollco Rohr Inc.

"Mr. Frank was keeping the Romeo trademark alive in the U.S.A. for Mr. Rodriguez by making a few RyJs in our Kingston, New York, machine-made factory and selling them in interstate commerce," says Brad Weinfeld, who was vice president of Hollco Rohr in the 1970s. Every year, Frank offered to buy the Romeo trademark, but, like many of the Cuban exiles, Rodriguez believed that Cuba would be opening up again soon, so every year, he declined.

"When Rodriguez passed in 1976, Mr. Frank went to Spain to meet with his widow and purchased the five trademarks. Romeo, Saint Luis Rey, Juan Lopez, Gispert and Quintero," says Weinfeld.



A Cuban Montecristo No. 2 next to a Dominican Montecristo Classic No. 2 Torpedo (right).



A photo from an old brochure promoting the Romeo y Julieta Vintage line. It was made by Manuel Quesada for Hollco Rohr in the 1990s.

In 1978, Manuel “Manolo” Quesada began to make the first handmade non-Cuban Romeos y Julietas at his MATASA factory in the Dominican Republic (a few were previously made by machine for interstate commerce to keep the U.S. trademark alive). The blend was typical of the time—Cameroon wrapper with Dominican filler. Quesada produced Romeos in small quantities until Hollco Rohr was acquired by tobacco giant Tabacalera S.A., in 1997. Two years later, Tabacalera merged with SEITA to form the mega-cigar company Altadis. Romeo y Julieta production was taken away from MATASA and moved to Tabacalera de Garcia, Altadis’s massive cigar factory in La Romana, Dominican Republic. It now comes in myriad varieties (made in both Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic) and today is the best-selling premium brand for Altadis.

HOYO DE MONTERREY

Hoyo de Monterrey was named after a hole—a very special hole. The Hole of Monterrey—or Basin of Monterrey, if you want a more romantic translation—refers to a fertile plantation bought by tobacco grower José Gener in 1860. Located on a river’s edge in the Vuelta Abajo region of Cuba, it periodically flooded and collected sand and vegetal matter, which made for a fine, silky soil and remarkable tobacco. In 1865, Gener registered the Hoyo de Monterrey trademark. The brand’s cigars were said to contain tobacco from that magical lot.

Gener died in 1900 and the business was taken over by his daughter. In 1931, she sold the Hoyo and La Escepcion brands to Fernandez, Palicio y Cia., a partnership between Ramon Fernandez and Fernando Palicio. (It is not clear if they bought the Hoyo de Monterrey farm or had access to its tobacco.)

After the Revolution, Palicio found himself in Tampa, Florida where he sold the Hoyo trademark to Daniel Blumenthal, chairman of Villazon & Co. By 1965, Hoyos were being produced in Honduras by Frank Llana at the Villazon factory.

“Up to that point, [Palicio] hadn’t wanted to sell Hoyo de Monterrey because every day he had thought they were going back to Cuba tomorrow,” said Blumenthal in an interview with CIGAR AFICIONADO before his death. “But he called me, and I went down to see him in Hialeah where we made a deal on Hoyo and Punch.”

Palicio sold his brands for almost \$700,000. The first batches of Honduran-made Hoyos were blended with Cuban tobacco. Villazon had amassed a large amount of Cuban leaf before the embargo and blended it into the Hoyo brand up until the 1970s when the Cuban stocks finally ran out. It couldn’t legally advertise the tobacco’s origin on the boxes or anywhere else, but the blend spoke for itself and the brand took off almost immediately.

In 1997, General Cigar Co. purchased Villazon for \$81.4 million and with it, the Hoyo de Monterrey brand. Today, the brand is still owned by General and offered in many varieties, most of which are made in Honduras.

PARTAGÁS

Once the crown jewel of the premium Havana cigar trade, Partagás cigars were one of the most sought after smokes to come out of Cuba and perhaps the most highly regarded. Partagás & Co. was founded in 1845 by Jaime Partagas, a Spaniard once dubbed the “grandmaster of tobacco confection.”

After 50 years of operation, the company had amassed more medals of distinction from more expositions around the world than any other cigar brand at the time. What made the company unique was its lock on some of the most precious soil in Cuba’s Vuelta Abajo region. Partagás owned the plantations—nearly 30,000 acres—and was able to supply his factory with an almost unlimited source of prime leaf.

In the 1860s, Jaime Partagás was shot to death in one of his own tobacco fields. Thirty-two years later, the family sold the factory to banker José A. Bances, who then sold it to Ramon Cifuentes and José Fernandez of Cifuentes, Fernandez & Co.

On September 15, 1960, Cuban soldiers stormed the factory under orders of Fidel Castro. Cifuentes described the events of that day to Marvin R. Shanken, editor and publisher of CIGAR AFICIONADO, in a 1991 interview.

“They took over the factory. They came inside, and said we’re here to [take over] the company. And they didn’t allow me to take anything from there,” said Cifuentes. The titanic brand of Partagás was nationalized, along with its precious plantations. In a strange twist, the government made Cifuentes an offer. They asked him to stay in Cuba and run all of Cuba’s factories. “They asked me to stay,” he said in 1991. “I said no.” He left Havana for the United States a few days later.

Instead of working for Castro, Cifuentes got a job working for Edgar Cullman Sr., president of Culbro Corp., at the time the parent company of General Cigar Co. For 10 years, Cullman offered to buy the Partagás trademark, but Cifuentes nursed the same dream of many displaced Cubans—that he’d soon be returning to his motherland, repatriated and ready to resume business.

Once Cifuentes accepted reality, he relented. In 1975, the Cifuentes family made a deal with General and the U.S. saw its first non-Cuban Partagas cigars in 1977.

"I heard two different stories about the contract," said Benji Menendez, who made Montecristos and H. Upmanns for his father Alonso in Cuba before expatriating to the U.S. "One version said that Cifuentes got a certain amount of money for production and also on the sale of each cigar like a royalty. The other version said that it was an outright purchase. I'm not sure which one was true, but General owns it now." It turns out both were true. Initially, it was not an outright purchase and a royalty was paid, but after a period of time General bought Cifuentes out.

Either way, who better to make the new Partagas cigar than Ramón Cifuentes himself? They were first produced in Jamaica under the supervision of Cifuentes and later in the Dominican Republic with Menendez. Together they helped to acclimate the U.S. to a new type of Partagas, one made in the Dominican Republic with Cameroon wrappers and Dominican fillers. (Unlike the Cuban version, the non-Cuban Partagas does not carry an accent in its brand name.) Partagas remains a major brand for General today, and along with the original style that bears a Cameroon wrapper, there are several other newer varieties.

PUNCH

Facts behind the Punch brand are a bit nebulous. It was registered in 1840 by someone named Stockman and named after the traditional Punch and Judy puppet shows. Ownership changed a few times before 1884 when Punch was owned by Manuel Lopez Fernandez. (The name Manuel Lopez appeared on Punch labels for quite some time, even after the Revolution.) After the stock market crashed in 1929, Punch was acquired by Fernandez, Palicio y Cia., makers of Hoyo de Monterrey and La Escepcion.

Over time, Punch cigars gained a large customer base in England based on the country's appetite for Cuban cigars and cultural appreciation for the Punch puppet character. Succumbing to the inevitable, Fernando Palicio fled to the U.S. after Cuba's mass nationalization, bringing with him the U.S. rights to the Punch trademark. He grudgingly sold the Punch trademark (along with Hoyo de Monterrey, see above) to Llaneza and Blumenthal of Villazon, who registered the Punch brand in 1965.

Like Hoyo de Monterrey, Punches were briefly made in Tampa before production was moved to Honduras. The cigars were originally made with both Cuban and Honduran tobacco. The Cuban leaf was slowly phased out over the course of a few years, but Punch gained a following in the United States among fans of stronger cigars. In 1997, General Cigar acquired Villazon, and with it, the Punch brand. Today General makes most of its Punch cigars in Honduras.

LA GLORIA CUBANA

First registered in 1885, the La Gloria Cubana brand had little recognition before 1905 when José F. Rocha & Co. purchased it. Rocha also owned the Bolivar brand. In 1954, following Jose Rocha's death, his family sold La Gloria and Bolivar to the Cifuentes family and production was moved to the Partagás factory under the supervision of Ramon Cifuentes. His operation came to a halt on September 15, 1960 when Castro's soldiers marched into the factory and seized the firm as well as its assets.

In the shadow of Partagás and even Bolivar was the small La Gloria Cubana brand. According to Ernesto Perez-Carrillo, his father bought the rights to La Gloria in Cuba when he owned the El Credito factory (which he bought in 1948), though he never produced La Gloria Cubana brand cigars until coming to the U.S.

By the 1960s, Perez-Carrillo's father reopened the El Credito factory in Miami. He started producing La Glorias on a very limited basis in 1974. "It wasn't until the 1980s that I started using all the original Cuban art to help market the cigars," says Perez-Carrillo about the brand his father brought to America. The Miami-made boutique cigars gained a local following at first but a high rating for its Wavell in this magazine gave La Gloria Cubana its boost to national fame. To meet demand, Perez-Carrillo moved production to the Dominican Republic in 1996. The brand's growth got the attention of General Cigar, which purchased La Gloria in 1999. Today, the cigars are made in the General Cigar Dominicana factory and have an extremely loyal U.S. following.

BOLIVAR

Founded by José Fernandez Rocha in the early 1900s, Bolivars were produced and sold under his company J.F. Rocha y Cia. The British tobacco merchants Walters & Co. bankrolled the factory and also distributed the brand in England. This accounts for England and Europe being its primary market. By 1920, Bolivar made inroads in the U.S. thanks to distributor A. J. Billin & Co., though not very much is known about this company.

A portrait of the revolutionary Simón Bolivar appeared on the box, but the bands were much more understated, showing a gilded crest. That changed after Rocha's death. In 1954, his family sold the brand to Cifuentes y Cia, known for their strong Partagás brand. No stranger to producing powerful smokes, Cifuentes produced some full-bodied Bolivars in its Partagás factory. At the same time, the bands were changed from a generic crest to include the Bolivar portrait.

Bolivars were enjoying consistent popularity in the years leading up to the Revolution. When Ramón Cifuentes came to the U.S., he worked for General Cigar and eventually sold the Bolivar trademark to General, which registered it in 1983. By the mid '90s, General was making just enough Bolivars to keep the trademark alive, but not enough for full commercial production. Then, in the late '90s, it made a Bolivar in the Dominican Republic, followed by a stronger version in Honduras. By 2005, General



A Cuban Partagás (left) next to one of the non-Cuban versions, which is rolled in the Dominican Republic.



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created a new core Bolivar brand blended to be powerful and earthy. Despite the brand's rich history, Bolivar lagged on the U.S. market. In 2015, it was announced that Bolivar would be folded into its now defunct subsidiary called the Foundry Tobacco Co. Bolivar was rebled, repackaged and remarketed. General still owns the trademark.

COHIBA

No cigar brand in the world has as much fanfare, controversy or mystique as Cohiba. The cigar was created in Cuba in 1966 for Fidel Castro, who ruled Cuba at the time. Diplomats and dignitaries in Castro's good graces got one—maybe even an entire case—as a gift. Cohiba came in one size, a long, thin lancero. Old photos of Castro often show him pontificating with a long, slender cigar in his mouth. Chances are, it was a Cohiba.

After the cigar had become mythic, Castro decided to share Cohiba with the rest of the world. They went on sale in 1982, in Spain, and sales were soon expanded on a global basis.

While the original Cohiba band was dull and brown, it quickly morphed into one of the most recognizable cigar bands in the world, with unmistakable branding: yellow and black, a grid of white dots, bold-font lettering, a Taino Indian head. Over time, the label has evolved and is now full of gold embossments and holographic elements meant to thwart counterfeiters.

The story behind Cohiba's Dominican-made U.S. counterpart differs from the rest of the parallel brands. Unlike most popular Cuban brands, Cohiba was created after the Revolution by the Castro government, so it was never seized from anyone. The disgruntled expatriates may have sought to reproduce their own family labels for the U.S. market, but they left Cohiba alone. Cohiba was not representative of their tobacco heritage, it was a symbol of the new regime. In the U.S., it belonged to no one.

General Cigar filed an application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark office in 1978 for the Cohiba mark. It was officially registered in 1981 and General began selling Dominican-made Cohibas in the U.S. in 1994. By 1997 General created what is known as the "red dot" Cohiba, with a logo featuring a red dot in the hole of the "O," quite a different look from Cuba's cigar. General didn't buy the trademark from anyone and felt they didn't have to. The Cuban government was outraged.

In response, Cuba sued over trademark infringement in January 1997. The case is officially known as *Empresa Cubana del Tabaco v. Culbro Corp.*, and Cohiba has been in litigation ever since. For 20 years the suit has gone back and forth in a legal tug-of-war with wins and losses for both sides, not to mention millions of dollars spent on legal fees.

The case is presently tied up with the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board (TTAB), which has yet to rehear it. Cuba still seeks to halt the sale of Cohibas in the U.S., and is demanding financial restitution. General claims that the embargo prevents the Cuban government from any trademark rights in the United States.

In the meantime, more than a half-dozen versions of Cohiba are made by General Cigar for the United States, and Cuba continues to come out with new varieties, including a 50th anniversary version created in 2016. The case of Cohiba v. Cohiba is still unresolved, with neither party backing down.

TRINIDAD

Like Cohiba, Trinidad cigars were not commercially available when they were created in the 1960s. They were reserved only for use as diplomatic gifts for visiting dignitaries. Boxes of these cigars have gone for dear prices at auction.

The first commercial Trinidads were sold in 1997, and they began as a single size called Fundadores. By the early 2000s, Cuba expanded the Trinidad line, adding three more sizes. The brand was small, but the mystique and allure was undeniable.

And it didn't seem to have any political baggage either. Cuba always maintained that Trinidad was a post-Revolution brand and therefore, had no nagging business ties to the past nor any legal standing to be marketed in the United States. Not everyone agreed. Diego Trinidad Jr. certainly didn't. He claimed his family did business under the Trinidad name well before Castro came to power.

Trinidad y Hermanos was founded by Diego Trinidad in 1905 as a tobacco company. Diego Trinidad Jr. took over the family business in 1920, incorporating in 1958 and renaming it TTT Trinidad. The business was confiscated a few years later.

Disenfranchised by the Revolution, the Trinidad family relocated to the U.S. and started Trinidad Tobacco Trading Corp. The Trinidads were looking for someone to produce their cigars and, in 1968, they found that someone in Tampa—the Fuentes. The Arturo Fuente factory made a line of Trinidad cigars for the Trinidad family out of its Tampa factory and did so up until the late 1970s. Production ceased after the Fuentes left Tampa, but in 1997, Fuente started making the Trinidads again, this time in the Dominican Republic.

The non-Cuban Trinidads came in two sizes, a Corona and Robusto and were made with a Cameroon wrapper. The rest of the tobacco was Dominican.

A legal battle ensued when the Trinidad family challenged the Cuban's ownership of the U.S. trademark. According to the Patent and Trademark Office, the U.S. trademark for "TTT Trinidad La Habana, Cuba," issued to Empresa Cubana in 1996, was based on the same Cuban trademark registered in 1958 by Trinidad y Hermano and was transferred to the Cuban government after the Revolution. This gave the Trinidad family a legal argument and a fighting chance.

"Our cigars are in the market with the exact replica of everything that [the Cuban version] has, which was ours to begin with," said Trinidad Jr. in 1997. "Let's see what they do about it."

In 2001, the Trinidad family won the trademark case and was granted the right to sell Trinidad cigars in the United States.

By 2002, a full line of Trinidads hit the U.S. market, but the Fuentes had not made them. That same year, Altadis U.S.A., purchased the brand from the Trinidad family and subsequently produced Trinidads in the Dominican Republic. Altadis U.S.A. remains the current U.S. trademark holder for Trinidad cigars.

Naturally, the entire narrative and existence of parallel brands leads to one question: what happens when the embargo ends? Will Cuban and non-Cuban versions of Montecristo share shelf space? Now that parallel brands are deeply entrenched in the U.S. market, the notion of reintroducing Cubans raises entirely new legal conundrums of ownership, and distribution rights, not to mention competition law.

Legal battles are likely. So are long negotiations. As for the future of parallel brands, all anyone can do is speculate. ♦



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DEATH OF A MASTER

José O. Padrón

José Orlando Padrón, the founder of the Padrón Cigar brand, died in the early morning hours on December 5. The legendary cigarmaker, who had run Padrón Cigars Inc. for 53 years, was surrounded by his family. He was 91 years old.

“He died peacefully, he didn’t suffer,” says his son Jorge, who has worked alongside his father since he was a young man.

“He was a true icon,” says Marvin R. Shanken, editor and publisher of CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine. “A much-loved leader and devoted family man who was uncompromising in his passion for cigars.”

Born in 1926 in Consolación del Sur, in Pinar del Río, Cuba, José Orlando Padrón was raised on his family’s tobacco farm. “My grandmother had a little table in her house where she would make cigars for the entire family,” Padrón said during an interview with CIGAR AFICIONADO in 2014. “Two things they were never without—wine and cigars. As a young boy, I saw that in my house. My grandfather every day would wake up, and every time I saw him he was looking at a cigar. Rolling it in his hand. Always touching tobacco.”

Padrón left Cuba in 1961 for Spain, and emigrated to the United States later that same year. After trying various forms of work—carpentry, landscaping, even ironing clothes—by March 1964 he had saved enough money to rent a tiny storefront on West Flagler Street in Miami. He applied for the permits to start a cigar factory. On September 8, 1964, Padrón Cigars was open for business. He had one cigar roller.

Those early smokes were quite modest, and Padrón sold his wares for 25 cents apiece, targeting the many cafeterias in Miami where Cuban expatriates like him smoked a cigar (or a few) after a meal. Sales began to increase when he introduced a fuma, a longer, more rustic cigar made with an extended pigtail tip.

In 1967, Padrón imported his first crop of Nicaraguan tobacco, a move that would change his company forever.

“In 1968, that’s the first year I started using Nicaraguan tobacco in my cigars,” Padrón said in 2014. “I went from 479,000 cigars to more than 800,000 cigars a year.” He was so enamored with Nicaraguan tobacco that he opened a cigar factory in Nicaragua in 1970.

Padrón Cigars evolved over time, changing from a small



José O. Padrón, the tobacco master who founded Padrón Cigars, in a 2016 photograph. Surrounding him are boxes of some of his finest cigars.

company that made inexpensive smokes for the local Miami market to a storied producer of cigars whose wares were admired around the world. Premium line extensions began with the 1964 Anniversary Series in 1994, then the Serie 1926, named for Padrón’s birth year, and later the Padrón Family Reserve.

No other cigar company has received as many accolades from CIGAR AFICIONADO as Padrón. The company has had 90-point score after 90-point score, and Padrón cigars have been named CIGAR AFICIONADO’s Cigar of the Year a record three times.

In 2012, José Orlando Padrón was inducted into the CIGAR AFICIONADO Hall of Fame.

He did more than just make cigars. In the 1970s Padrón traveled to Cuba, at one point meeting face-to-face with then Cuban leader Fidel Castro to negotiate the release of many political prisoners. The trips were successful, resulting in the freedom of many prisoners, but also sparking complaints, protests and even attacks on his headquarters back in Miami. He felt the results were worth the trouble.

“He was so much more than just a cigar guy,” says Jorge.

On the occasion of his company’s 50th anniversary in 2014, CIGAR AFICIONADO asked Padrón how he would like to be remembered during a meeting in his company headquarters in Miami.

“As someone who has helped others,” he said in his signature gruff baritone, a burning Padrón cigar held in his right hand. “What I’ve had I’ve shared with other people, with my family.”

Padrón is survived by his wife, Flory; children Elizabeth, Orlando, Jorge and Lisette; grandchildren Marcos and Melissa, Jessica, Jeffrey, Daniel, David, Jorge Luis, Daniella Miranda, Andres, Alfonso and Natalia; and great-grandchildren Ricco and Stella Soto. ♦

—David Savona

moments to remember

Please send all submissions to: CIGAR AFICIONADO/Moments to Remember, Worldwide Plaza, 825 Eighth Avenue, 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10019. Or e-mail them to: momentstoremember@mshanken.com. To order additional copies of CIGAR AFICIONADO, call 1-800-344-0763.



Marvin R. Shanken, editor & publisher of CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine, lights up with Fox News anchor Bret Baier at Tiburón Golf Club at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort in Naples, Florida, during Greg Norman's Shark Shootout Pro-Am.



Celebrating the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation's Annual All in for a Cure Poker Tournament at Grand Havana Room in New York City are Ricardo Salmon, Troy Gregory, Michael Casty, winner Omer Gundogdu and Jordan Dickstein.



Bradley Diamond, Mitchell Kunikoff, Morris Dweck and Joel Herskowitz of Lee & Associates NYC light up premium cigars on the 18th hole after playing in their firm's annual golf outing at Engineer's Country Club in Roslyn, New York.



London Shooting Club members Richard Meyer, left, and Steve Jones, right, relax with a couple of Cuban Montecristo No. 2 cigars on an enjoyable October day at the Ridgeway partridge and pheasant shoot in Oxfordshire, England.



On their wedding day, Matt Kochasic and Gabrielle Maldonado savor cigars at The Sunset Room in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, surrounded by the groomsmen, best man Michael Kochasic and the father of the bride Samuel Maldonado.



Cigar-smoking aviators, Captain Randall Davis, left, and First Officer S. Marcus Buell, right, of Frontier Airlines bring a copy of CIGAR AFICIONADO's 25th Anniversary issue aboard an Airbus A321 on a recent flight to Chicago.



On their annual trip to Las Vegas, Nevada, Peter and Tom Snow share quality father-son time while pairing handrolled cigars with libations at the Montecristo Cigar Bar in Caesars Palace.



Supervisor Mike Dinius, sergeant Mike Pilato, chief William Tokajer, and officers Lee Diehl and Joel Pierce wait for the arrival of Hurricane Irma with Padrón 1964 Anniversary Series cigars.



On a trip to Havana, Cuba, the Michel and Akbar families sample the local fare by enjoying cocktails and fine Cuban cigars on the veranda behind the legendary Hotel Nacional de Cuba.

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The San Marcos Cigar Club holds its first meeting with Todd Johnson, top left, Chris Del Rey, top right. Bottom row, from left, Amir Shabankar, Jeff Bowden, Dave Rinehart and John Phillips.



Childhood friends celebrating their anniversaries over cigars in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. From left, John and Judy Kirkpatrick, Barbara and David Cooper, Susan and David Webber.



Bob Musumeci, alongside friends and family, savors a cigar moment with his new son-in-law Milton Quaresma on his wedding day at the Web Barn in Old Wethersfield, Connecticut.



Philip Gammon and Bruce Howie take a break from vehicle testing on the Ottawa Light Rail Transit project to light up a couple of cigars.



Kelly Fisher and Justin Von Schmidt mark their engagement by savoring cigars while vacationing on the island of Grenada.



Friends gather at Hard Nak's Bar in Lakewood, California, over drinks and cigars. From left, Robin Hernandez, Mike Black, Kent Nakakura (owner of Hard Nak's), Mario Staats and Hamilton Kim.



Larry Seaton and Darioush Khaledi enjoy a couple of cigars together at the Darioush Winery holiday party in Napa, California.



Dave Dingee, Jay O'Connell and Jim Minnelli live the good life while smoking Cohibas on vacation in Harwich Port, Massachusetts.



A LEGEND AMONG LANDMARKS

A standard for cigar aficionados for 20 years, Shelly's Back Room is a comfortable, yet still elegant, retreat in which to enjoy fine cigars and choose from a distinguished assortment of single malt and blended whiskies. Lunch, dinner and late-night menus offer the perfect complement to your cigar smoking pleasure.

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Jay Harris, Stan Dickman, Dennis Damshroeder, Tim Laudner and Dick Bremer live it up at the Minnesota Twins Baseball Fantasy Camp Cigar Party.



Mary Paoletti, Laura Flood, Evan Paoletti, Bob Paoletti, John Crutchfield, Bob LeBouef, Bill LeBouef and Mike Paoletti tailgate with cigars at the Fiesta Bowl.



Captain Andrew Samour with the rest of the Mount Sinai Fire Department of Long Island, New York, celebrating their annual Installation Dinner. Puffing on premium cigars and sipping libations while enjoying the camaraderie of their firefighter brothers always makes for a fine occasion.



Chris Anderson, center left, celebrates his birthday with Dwight Jones, Darryl Redmon and Tom Huskerson at Falcon Dunes Golf Course in Waddell, Arizona.



Al Ursek, Joe Shea, Chuck Reynolds and Jim Quinn enjoy local cigars and beer while escaping the winter on a beach in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.



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Gary Novak, his son-in-law Brian Caszatt, left, and his son Dustin Duryea, right, indulge in their annual Christmas cigar tradition in Howell, Michigan.



Dawn Galante celebrates her birthday by sipping tasty rum and smoking cigars with Janet Elarmo at Hotel Eden Roc in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.



On a trip to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to ring in his 90th birthday, Charles Merzian, center, smokes cigars with his sons, Harry, left, and Peter, right.



At a reunion, the Blidy family, from left, John Jr., Joe, John Sr. and Paul, toast to 100 years in America by lighting up a round of cigars in Eden, New York.



Newlyweds Keith and Laurel Raker of Chagrin Falls, Ohio, savor Macanudo Vintage Cabinet Selection 1997 cigars during their English Hunt wedding.



Brendan Bass living the good life on his 60th birthday with cigars and jovial camaraderie alongside Anthony Lorenzo and Jim Breece in Dallas, Texas.

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The Big Smoke Comes To Las Vegas

For more than two decades, cigar fanatics from across the globe have made a pilgrimage to the sun-roasted streets of Las Vegas. They arrive by airplane, bus and car, landing on the hot pavement of Sin City with a shared goal in mind: to smoke handmade cigars, drink fine spirits and attend educational tobacco seminars. For those cigar devotees, all roads led to CIGAR AFICIONADO'S annual Big Smoke weekend November 17, 18 and 19, held at the Mirage Hotel.

The Big Smoke will return to Las Vegas November 9 through November 11, 2018. For those who can't wait, the next stop on the Big Smoke tour is Miami Beach, on March 16. ♦

—David Clough

For complete coverage of the Las Vegas Big Smoke, go to CigarAficionado.com



At the Big Smoke Evening, Carlos Salsa, Paulo Dias, Francois Castellon, Lucca Amicone and Ray Bourgeois sample cigars and choice libations.



The Big Smoke puts the world's top cigarmakers together in one ballroom. Here, A.J. Fernandez greets a fellow lover of the leaf during an Evening party.



Honoring the 2016 Cigar of the Year, guests light up the victorious La Flor Dominicana Andalusian Bull during a presentation by its maker: Litto Gomez.



Gabe Cardarella, North American Whisky Ambassador at Bacardi, joins editor Jack Bettridge for a tasting seminar pairing Aberfeldy, Craigellachie and Dewar's Scotch with Oliva cigars.



Executive editor David Savona; John Oliva Jr., of Oliva Tobacco Co.; Craig Cass, owner of the Tinder Box of the Carolinas; Ernesto Perez-Carrillo, of EPC Cigar Co.; and senior contributing editor Gordon Mott discuss 25 years of changes on CIGAR AFICIONADO'S 25th Anniversary panel.

made for you



In a world of fast food and one-size-fits-all sensibilities, how often does something feel made especially for you? The “Made for You” section celebrates those items that are created with such high quality of hand workmanship and degree of customization that they become individual to you. In each issue, our editors will endeavor to bring you special things from anywhere on the globe, choosing them solely on the basis of outstanding quality. Our goal is to give you guidance on the best of everything.

1 KEEP ON TRUCKIN’—BARRETT-JACKSON

Barrett-Jackson’s 47th annual Scottsdale Auction (in Arizona’s WestWorld from January 13 to 21) is a nod to truck heritage. Among the prizes are vintage trucks and full custom builds. Included will be fully restored ’40s-era Dodge Power Wagons and a ’56 Ford F-100 featuring a custom chassis, and a modern Mustang 5.0 Coyote engine. Also featured will be NASCAR racing legend Rusty Wallace’s ’66 Chevrolet El Camino Custom Pickup built by West Coast Customs with numerous upgrades by another renowned builder, Detroit Speed. barrett-jackson.com

2 24-KARAT VALENTINE—MINI MELANIE AND KIM CRAWFORD

Put a little glitter in your Valentine’s Day gift with the limited-edition, 24-karat-gold, Sauvignon Blanc-infused, chocolate cake truffles from Mini Melanie and Kim Crawford Wines. The 12-piece box includes dark-, milk- and white-chocolate truffles, hand-painted with 24-karat gold leaf and then decorated gold sugar dragées. The center is composed of dark-chocolate ganache filled with Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc, which is also the suggested pairing for enjoying the truffles. kimcrawfordwines.com, minimelanie.com

3 BOURBON BOOT CAMP—MOONSHINE UNIVERSITY

Perhaps it wasn’t your parents’ dream when they hoped that you would go on to higher education, but Moonshine University, of the Kentucky Distillers Association, considers itself among the Ivy League in the whiskey-making world. Despite the name this is serious scientific study. You’ll learn cooking, fermenting, distilling, cutting hearts and tails, even how to start your own microdistillery or start a career working for a larger operation. Instructors are all steeped in the distillery business. moonshineuniversity.com

4 WINE BY THE GLASS—PLUM

Say you want some of that trophy wine you just bought, but don’t feature downing it all at once. Just place the bottle in the wine-on-demand appliance (\$1,499) from Plum, and it will not only serve you, but preserve the wine up to 90 days. The appliance scans the bottle bar code and chills the wine to the appropriate temperature based on the varietal. A needle pierces any cork or metal cap and draws wine while filling the empty space with argon gas for preservation. Labels appear on the touchscreen. plum.wine

5 GOLFING THROUGH HISTORY—NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

The National WWII Museum’s Heroes & Legends tour brings history buffs and golfers to the historic shores of Normandy and Scotland, traveling with golf pros Lanny Wadkins and John Mahaffey and WWII historian Dr. Donald L. Miller. The nine-day July excursion includes visits to the beaches of Normandy, the site of the D-Day invasion that helped lead the Allies to victory in the Second World War. The tour features four golf courses, including Gleneagles in Scotland, and visits to memorials, museums and battle sites for a greater understanding of World War II. Pricing starts at \$12,999. nationalww2museum.org

6 THE CANT TABLE—VINTAGE INDUSTRIAL

The Cant Table is aptly named. The look of it seems to say it can’t possibly stand up. But the concept is solid, and it turns out it actually can. The dining/conference table (\$12,900) from Vintage Industrial uses a cantilever steel-plate base design to make one end of its stainless steel top appear to float in space. The Arizona company specializes in ruggedly masculine pieces that includes seating, desks and restaurant furniture. All products can be customized. retro.net

OLD FASHIONED EVEN IN 1891



The image features two bottles of Craigellachie Single Malt Scotch Whisky. The bottle on the left is labeled 'Aged 13 Years' and the one on the right is 'Aged 31 Years'. Both bottles have detailed labels with the distillery's history and location. The background is a stylized, woodcut-style illustration of a distillery building with a large still and a sign that reads 'WORLD WHISKIES AWARDS WORLD'S BEST SINGLE MALT'. A small crest with 'CRAIGELLACHIE 1891 SPEYSIDE 1891' is also visible.

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